

CALLED TO ADOPTION: HIRING AN ADOPTION PROFESSIONAL



"Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work ... of the LORD is finished."

1 Chronicles 28:20

Interview adoption professionals as you start your search for someone to help you build your family through adoption. Here are some questions you should ask and know the answers to:

- How long have you been in the adoption profession?
- How did you first become involved in adoption? Why?
- What services do you provide, both for adoptive parents and for birth parents?
- What services don't you provide?
- What are your fees? When are they due?
- What is your particular area of expertise?
- Do you have a formal contract?
- Depending on the type of service that is offered, are you licensed, bonded, or certified?
- What is your success rate, and in what time frame can the average family expect to adopt?
- Do you have an open door policy? Can we tour your facility?
- How many adoptions do you complete a year?
- What are your security procedures for data, both digital and hard copy?
- What are your hours? Can you be reached after hours and on weekends or holidays?
- How do you primarily communicate with waiting adoptive families? With birth parents?

The best tools you will use while conducting your adoption research are the notes and files you will keep during your search. Keep hard copies or electronic files. Your files should include all the information, literature, and notes you have obtained on the professional you are considering. Keep a list of dates and the names of the people you speak to.

I recommend you also write down how the phone conversation went. Did they answer the phone with a live person, or did you have to leave a message during regular hours? Was their website informative, updated, and helpful? Did it have broken links or old information? What type of track record do they have in adoption success? Did you feel valued and encouraged when you hung up?

Take steps to do common sense investigation, too, such as:

- Check out the Better Business Bureau and/or licensing board.
- Ask for references and check them out.
- Review any agreement or contract with an independent adoption attorney.
- Learn about the size of the staff, how after-hours calls are handled, and other services that may affect your adoption. This is very important if you need to speak with someone urgently about your own adoption.
- Research the organization from a birth parent's perspective. How does it feel? Would you call them?

Working with an adoption professional in another state is very common and easy with the use of the Internet. With planning, patience, and the determination to follow through on your information, you should feel confident in the adoption professional you finally select. You will save time, money, and frustration when you plan and use the questions above. Your research will become invaluable to you and your adoption success.

At our center, we work around the clock with both adoptive families and prospective birth parents across the country. Through the internet, email, instant message, live chat, 24-hour phone lines, Skype, mail, and in person meetings, our staff truly meets clients where they are. Communication is one of the main keys to adoption success. This is the time to do your research, ask questions, and consider an adoption professional from all sides as you make your selection.

Remember to include God in your decision-making process. Pray over your work. Pray for the adoption professionals you come in contact with. Let the Lord guide your steps to adoption and follow His call.

Answering Your Questions

What does an agency, attorney, and adoption facilitator do? And what do I need?

Their roles vary, and their expertise is essential to your success. Which professional you select will depend on several factors, including the type of child you seek, your expectations, and the method of adoption you use.

If you plan to adopt a newborn through an open, independent adoption, in most states, you can choose a full-service licensed facilitator who will locate and match you with a birth mother. They should also connect you to and work closely with a qualified attorney. Many adoptive families find this to be the preferable option because of the opportunity for nationwide exposure to birth mothers.

An adoption agency can help with the entire process, however, the wait is often longer due to the focus on birth mothers within their state lines and the time spent providing home study and legal services for adoptive families. Be sure to ask about potential wait times and the number of adoptions completed per year through your local office.

Adoption attorneys will be required for the legal aspect of your adoption and will be retained by you for an independent adoption, or provided for you as part of the agency services if your birth mother is in your state. Get referrals for attorneys when the time comes that you need one and be sure their specialty is adoption.

How do I know if the adoption facilitator I'm considering is properly licensed or regulated?

Many states don't regulate or require adoption facilitators to be licensed. However, in the State of California adoption facilitators are regulated and licensed. It should be as easy as asking your professional for their accreditations with the state.

At our center, Lifetime Adoption, we are even able to work nationwide with adoptive families and birth mothers who live outside of our state.

Does the number of waiting families reflect how long I should expect to wait for a match?

No, this factor alone should not. You need to learn about a combination of things, including the number of birth mothers they work with, the average wait time, and other factors about the particular professional.

Your own adoption preferences and needs for your adoption will contribute to your wait, but the experience and statistics of the professional will influence your wait, as well.

Some professionals may only complete 6 adoptions per year, so if they have 40 waiting families, there may be cause for concern. At Lifetime Adoption, we complete over 120 adoptions per year, so over 120 waiting families are needed so birth mothers have a choice of families.

Do adoption professionals provide the opportunity to speak with former clients?

Yes, they should. And you should take the opportunity to contact the adoptive families and learn from them. Ask about the professional, but also ask about their adoption journey. This is a valuable opportunity to learn from others who have traveled the path you are considering.

Remember, these are people who are now parents, so they may not respond right away, so give them a little grace in awaiting a response. You should always ask for references.