

POST ADOPTION SERVICES

Because adoption is a life-long process, Catholic Charities is committed to providing services as long as needed. Counseling is available to all members of the Adoption Triad (adopted person, adoptive parents, and birth parents) before and after adoptive placement.

Recent changes in the Mississippi Adoption Law (1992) allow adoption agencies to help triad members in certain ways. Based on the law, Catholic Charities offers the following services:

ADOPTED PERSONS (or adoptees) 18 years or older may request non-identifying information about themselves. This may include physical descriptions of their birth parents, their ages, education, occupations, interests, abilities, and any health history. It may not include any information which might reasonably lead to the discovery of the identity of either birth parent.

If the adoption was not handled by Catholic Charities (where the record would be on file), the adoptee may request a search for the birth parents in order to secure the information. If the birth parent refuses to provide the information, the adoptee may try to get a court order (showing good cause) to obtain the information.

When an adoptee is 21 years or older, a request can be made for identifying information concerning the birth parents. Before this information can be released, the adoptee shall have a counseling session with a licensed adoption agency. The purpose of the counseling is to understand the adoptee's motivation for and expectations of the search. Information about the adoptee is secured in order to explain to the birth parents the reasons for the search. Also, an explanation of the birth parents' right to permit or prohibit identifying information about themselves to be revealed is given. Additional counseling is offered to the adoptee in the event the birth parents refuse contact, as this is often a very distressing situation to the adoptee. The adoptee may petition the Chancery Court to order the disclosure of any identifying information, and the court shall grant such a petition for good cause.

The agency uses information contained in case records, or on an adoptee's original birth certificate, in order to locate birth parents. These contacts are extremely discreet, as reasons why a person is being sought are considered confidential. Once a birth parent is advised of the adoptee's search, he or she is advised of their right to permit or prohibit their identity being revealed. An affidavit provided by the Bureau of Vital Statistics will be sent to the birth parent. It must be signed, notarized, and sent back to the Agency before information can be given.

Because a meeting between an adoptee and a birth parent may be highly charged emotionally, the agency offers to arrange the meeting in a neutral setting (the office, if possible). Agency personnel, with experience in this area, is available to assist all the parties in meeting one another, becoming comfortable, and asking all the questions they may have. After a period of time, the adoptee and the birth parent are given time alone to become acquainted. If the assistance of the agency personnel is needed at any time thereafter, it is available.

BIRTH PARENTS: A mother or father who releases a child for adoption is not allowed to search for their son or daughter according to the law. However, birth parents may request the Bureau of Vital Statistics form which gives permission for their identities to be revealed to the adoptee. This form is filed with the Bureau, and a copy may also be placed in the agency's file. Then, if the adoptee requests a search for the birth parents, there can be immediate contact.

There may be a reason why a birth parent does not wish their identity to be revealed, and the law upholds their right to prohibit revelation. When an affidavit to that effect is filed, the agency is prohibited from making further contacts with the birth parent. If only one birth parent consents to the release of identifying information, that parent shall not reveal the identity of the other parent, and he or she shall sign an affidavit stating that no such information shall be revealed. The release of such information by a birth parent shall subject the parent to personal civil liability.

ADOPTIVE PARENTS: As an adopted child grows and develops, adoptive parents may need assistance with how to handle questions their son or daughter has. Counseling about adoption issues is available to the parents. Assistance may be given in connecting parents with others who have adopted children in the same age range or dealing with similar concerns.

Non-identifying or medical information about a child can be requested by adoptive parents. If it is not available in the record, it can be sought from birth parents if there is reasonable need to know. Likewise, if medical information needs to be passed on to birth parents, the adoptive parents can do so through the agency.

CHILDREN OR BLOOD SIBLINGS OF ADOPTEE: The law allows non-identifying information to be released to these parties as well.

FEE SCALE FOR POST ADOPTION SERVICES

Counseling	\$ 50.00 per hour	Medical Information from Record	\$ 25.00	Non identifying history from Record	\$ 50.00
Search for Birth Parents (if adopted from CCI)	\$100.00 per each birth parent				
Search for Birth Parent (if adopted privately)	\$300.00				