

Is International Adoption Right for Your Family?

FAMILY

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Talking With
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ADOPTION: A Loving Option



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Syracuse attorney Kevin Harrigan specializes in the legally and emotionally complex process of creating families through adoption. In the past 30 years, he has developed a nationwide reputation for his expertise in New York State, interstate and international adoption law - - as well as widespread respect for his compassion, accessibility and integrity.

Kevin has helped thousands of prospective adoptive parents successfully navigate the adoption process. He has guided many birth parents through the challenging decision to make a permanent placement plan for their unborn child. Kevin also has extensive experience in international readoption, as well as co-parent, step-parent and grandparent adoptions.

Kevin is a member of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys and recipient of the Angels in Adoption Award from the United States Senate.



FAMILY CONNECTIONS

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How Can I Make An Adoption Plan for My Unborn Child?

Adoption: A Loving Option

By: Renee Hettich, MA, LMSW

Are you experiencing an unexpected pregnancy? If so, you may be feeling anxious, confused, indecisive, and overwhelmed. You want what is best for you and your child but you may be unsure what to do.

Should I parent the child or make an adoption plan for the child with an adoptive family? The decisions are yours to make. Your choices will be influenced by your personal beliefs, your age, your relationship to the father of the child, your social situation, your support from family and friends, your future goals and aspirations, and other personal interests.

So how do I sort through my jumble of emotions, the intricacy of my situation, and the complexity of my options? Reaching out to family and friends for support and guidance will help. Seeking counsel and assistance from a social worker with expertise in the field of parenting and adoption will be vital. A professional social worker can help you explore your feelings surrounding your pregnancy and plan for your child. The social worker can help you secure resources you may need to help you make your decision regarding parenting or adoption. The social worker can help you explore your parenting or adoption options. The social worker will support you as you make positive and loving choices for

you and your child. Qualified social workers can be found at counseling centers, community clinics, and adoption agencies. Please understand that you have the right to make your own decisions regarding the parenting or adoption of your child. No one should influence or coerce your decision-making – not your parents, siblings, friends, social worker, attorney, doctor, counselor, etc. Social workers at Family Connections, Inc., a not-for-profit, authorized adoption agency, are available to assist you and will support and respect your choices.

If I decide to make an adoption plan for my child, what are my options? You are in the “driver’s seat” and will make the decisions regarding your plan to place your child with an adoptive family. You have many adoption options and can design your own adoption plan. Family Connections, Inc. can help you choose an adoption plan that is right for you and your child. You may choose a confidential adoption, where your identity and that of the adoptive parents is held in confidence. The adoptive family will not know you and you will not meet the adoptive parents. Or you may choose an open adoption, where you may choose to have contact with your child’s adoptive parents. The degree of openness with the adoptive family would depend upon your choices. For example you may wish to meet two or three families before you chose a family for your child. You may or may not wish to have contact with the adoptive family prior to the child’s birth. You may wish to receive pictures and letters from your child’s adoptive parents as the child grows. You may wish to have limited on-going visitation with the adoptive family. The possibilities are many and the choices are yours.

If I wish to make an adoption plan for my child, what do I do now? There are a number of steps you will take in planning for you and your child.

- Your first step is to consult with a qualified adoption agency like Family Connections, Inc. The agency will assist you as you design and implement your adoption plan.
- Second, you will speak with an attorney who will explain your legal rights and answer your questions. An adoption agency can refer you to an attorney who is specialized in adoption.
- Next, you will consider qualified adoptive parents. The agency will provide you with profiles of adoptive families; profiles are booklets and/or web pages and/or videos that feature information about and pictures of the family. All adoptive parents are fully investigated and approved as qualified adoptive parents by an adoption agency or by Family Court. You may choose a family from these profiles or you may wish to meet with two or three of the families over lunch to get to know them better before making your decision. You will then decide which adoptive family you wish to make an adoption plan with.
- Now that you have identified a family for your child, the adoption agency will support you as you continue in your pregnancy and adoption planning. If you choose to build a relationship with the adoptive family prior to the child's birth, the agency will help you work out additional contact with the adoptive family.
- When the baby arrives, you will make your decision regarding the adoptive placement of your child. Up until the child's birth, your adoption plan is just that - a plan. Once the baby is born, you decide whether or not to surrender the custody of your child to the adoption agency for placement with the adoptive family you have chosen.
- After you place your child for adoption, your plan for post adoption contact (if any) will be honored.

What about ... I have other questions? You must have a zillion questions running through your mind. Hopefully we can answer a few ...

- Will my child know that I made a loving choice? Yes! Adoptive parents have tremendous respect and admiration for you and your decision to entrust your child (a precious gift) to them. They will honor you and speak of you with great reverence and love to their child.
- Will my privacy be respected? Yes. Your privacy will be ensured. Confidentiality is maintained at all times.
- Will the adoption cost me anything? No. You will have no costs. All expenses are supported by the adoption agency and adoptive parents. If you need resources to support your pregnancy and adoption plan, the adoption agency will help you secure the needed resources (e.g. maternity clothes, housing, food, transportation, medical services).
- Will I receive counseling services? Yes, if you choose. Family Connections, Inc. provides adoption options counseling and offers private therapeutic counseling services to you prior to and after the adoption.
- Will my right to post adoption contact be protected? Yes, if you wish for post adoption contact with the adoptive family (e.g. exchange of pictures and letter, annual visitation with child). You and the adoptive family will sign a legal document that obligates the family to comply. This agreement is enforceable by the court only if you place your baby using agency services.

Facing an unplanned pregnancy and making decisions regarding the care and parenting of your child is challenging. Family Connections, Inc. can help you make positive choices for you and your unborn baby. Please learn more about the agency at www.adoptfamilyconnections.org. We look forward to supporting you as you make loving decisions regarding the care of your baby. Please call us at 1-800-535-5556 or (607) 756-6574 or e-mail us at info@adoptfamilyconnections.org for assistance. Every call and e-mail is confidential!



Is International Adoption Right for Your Family?

Written by Renee Hettich, MA, LMSW

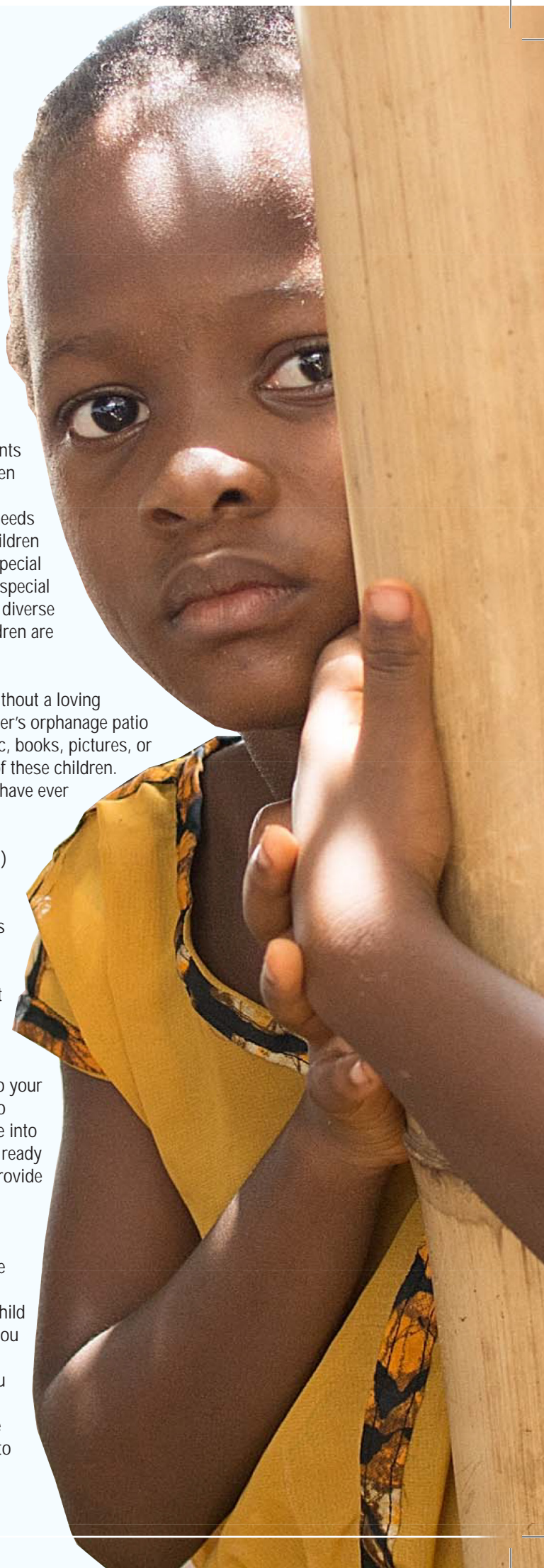
Could you open your hearts and home to an orphan? Orphaned children from around the globe are in need of forever adoptive families through inter-country (international) adoption. Children are waiting in orphanages and foster care around the world for mommies, daddies, sisters, and brothers.

Orphaned boys and girls are waiting for families. The children are infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school-agers, and teenagers. There are single children and sibling groups. The children are abandoned or orphaned by their birth parents or have been removed from their birth parents due to abuse/neglect. The children may be healthy, typical children who have the potential for normal growth and development. Or the children may have special developmental and/or medical needs ranging from minor correctable medical needs (e.g. cleft palate, club foot) to children with on-going medical challenges (e.g. heart condition) to children with minor special needs (e.g. limb deformity, cerebral palsy, visual impairments) to children with special needs requiring life-long care (e.g. Down Syndrome, blind). The children are of diverse ethnic heritage (e.g. Eastern European, African, Asian, Hispanic). All of the children are orphaned and are living in orphanages or foster homes around the world.

These children are faced with unthinkable challenges as they strive to survive without a loving family. I will never forget the blank faces of the children lined-up on my daughter's orphanage patio strapped into bouncy seats and walkers staring at gray walls with no toys, music, books, pictures, or people to engage their developing minds. Loving families are needed for each of these children. Could you be their family? Adopting my daughter is the most important thing I have ever done for her and for me.

Is your family able to parent a child adopted through inter-country (international) adoption? You can open your home and heart to a foreign-born child of a different culture and ethnic group. You can give love, comfort, security, and stimulation for a child. You can learn how to support the social/emotional needs of a child adopted after infancy. You can learn how to support the medical and developmental needs for a child with less than a perfect start in life or for a child with special medical and/or developmental needs. You can love a child that doesn't resemble you and help that child to develop a positive race identity. You may not have the medical or social history of your child but can manage without knowing. You can be flexible and patient with the unpredictability in the international adoption process. Think about how interesting it will be to travel to your child's country of origin for the adoption. Think about how much fun it will be to expand your family's cultural identity and incorporate your child's native heritage into your family life. Please know that other families and adoption professionals are ready and able to support your family. Inter-country adoption is a wonderful way to provide a family for a child without parents and to expand and enrich your family.

So where do you start? Remember that adoption is a process in which adoption professionals will guide you through each step. Your first step is to consider the needs of the child you may adopt. Put yourself in their shoes and ask yourself - are you the "right family" for the child. For example, if you adopt an African child will the child feel welcomed and will his/her racial identity be supported? Or if you adopted a child with special needs, can the child's medical, developmental, and social/emotional needs be properly met within your family and community? You need to educate yourself and be honest with yourself so you can decide what type of child (e.g. age, ethnic heritage, special needs, siblings, etc) would be the "best fit" for the child and for your family. Adoption professionals will be there to



guide you and provide you information to help you make good choices.

As you consider inter-county adoption programs you will need to determine if the inter-country adoption program meets your desires in regards to the child you wish to adopt - age, gender, ethnic heritage, race, single child or sibling group, typical child or child with special needs, etc. You will also need to consider the following aspects of the program:

- (1) Do you meet the eligibility requirements for adoptive parents in the country for which you wish to adopt?
- (2) Can your family meet the travel requirements for the program?
- (3) Are you able to meet the financial obligations of the program?
- (4) Can you accept the wait time for the program?

The inter-county adoption process includes the following steps: Remember adoption professionals will guide and support you through each process. You just have to take one step at a time.

Step 1 - Home Study Investigation

This must be conducted by a licensed/authorized and Hague Accredited adoption agency in the state where you reside. Family Connections, Inc. is an authorized New York State agency that is Hague Accredited by the Council on Accreditation. If your international adoption placement agency is in the State where you live, you may use this agency to conduct the home study. However, many families use an international adoption placement agency that is in another State and thus need to find another adoption agency within their State to complete the study. AND

Selection of a Primary Provider / International Adoption Placement Agency - To adopt a foreign-born orphan you will need to work with an International Adoption Placement Agency (aka Primary Provider) that has the authority to work in the country from which you wish to adopt and that has achieved Hague Accreditation from the Council on Accreditation.

Step 2 - Citizenship & Immigration Services Pre-approval

All prospective adoptive parents must apply to Citizenship & Immigration Services (via forms I-600A or I-800A) to qualify to adopt a foreign born orphan. Your home study provider and Primary Provider can help you complete these forms.

Step 3 - Submission of Dossier to Foreign Country

Every prospective adoptive family must submit a dossier (collection of documents that constitutes your application for adoption) to the foreign country. Your dossier may include documents such as birth certificates, marriage certificate, medical reports, criminal clearances, home study report, pictures, etc.

Step 4 - The Wait

The hardest part of the process is waiting for a referral of a child(ren). The wait varies with the country, the age of the child, the number of children, and the health and developmental status of the child. Currently the longest wait is for a healthy young child and the shortest wait is for an older child or a child with special needs. You are able to designate the special needs you are comfortable adopting.

Step 5 - The Referral

Your International Adoption Placement Agency (aka Primary Provider) will present a child(ren) to your family for consideration. You may receive a picture(s) of the child, a medical report, and a developmental assessment of the child or you may need to travel to the country to meet the child before you match with the child. It is strongly recommended that you have a pediatrician with expertise in international adoption medicine to review the child's referral before you make a decision regarding the child's adoption. This will help to educate you and mitigate some of the inherent risks.

Step 6 - The Decision

After your careful consideration of the child, you will decide whether or not to adopt the child. If you decide to commit to the child, you will proceed to adoption. If you decide that you are not the right family for this child, your international adoption placement agency will present you with another child in need of a family when another child is available. All agencies involved in your inter-country adoption want you to be comfortable with the child you choose to adopt and will help you to be prepared to parent the child.

Step 7 - The Adoption

You will travel to your child's country of origin to complete his/her adoption. Your International Adoption Placement Agency will facilitate your trip and adoption, guiding you from takeoff to your return home.

Step 8 - Immigration of the Child to the United States

After you adopt your child in the foreign country you will immigrate the child into the United States through the approval of a Citizenship and Immigration Services (via form I-600 or I-800) and the issuance of a Visa by the U.S. Embassy located in the child's country of origin.

Step 9 - The Transition Home and Required Supervision

You and your new child(ren) will settle into a new life. Most countries require that your adoption be supervised by an authorized/licensed and Hague Accredited adoption agency for a period of time after your arrival home to ensure that the child is safe and your family is adjusting well. Supervision is usually done by your home study provider so by the time you are home with your child you know and trust your social worker.

Step 10 - Life Long Support for the Child & Family

As your family grows and your child develops you may have questions or need support. Family Connections, Inc. supports families throughout the life of the child. The agency is also available for support and guidance.

Is your family ready and able to embrace a new child through inter-county adoption? Adoption professionals at Family Connections, Inc. are available to help you explore your family's adoption plan. Family Connections, Inc. is an authorized New York State adoption agency that has achieved Hague Accreditation from the Council on Accreditation. Please visit our website at www.adoptfamilyconnections.org or contact the agency at 607-756-6574 or at info@adoptfamilyconnections.org to learn more about international adoption. Let us help!



Conversation Starters: Promoting Family Communication

Written by Tom Lickona, Ph.D.

How can we increase meaningful and enjoyable conversation with family and friends? The art of conversation is largely the art of asking good questions - ones that draw out others' thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The following conversation starters can be used in one-on-one interactions between parents and kids, spouses, and friends or as group topics at mealtime or any other gathering.

1. What was the best part of your day?
2. What was the hardest part of today? How did you deal with it?
3. What's the good news and the bad news from today?
4. What are you grateful for today?
5. What happened today that you didn't expect?
6. What's something you learned today?
7. What was an interesting conversation you had today?
8. What's something you accomplished today?
9. How did you help someone today, or how did someone help you?
10. What is something someone in the family did recently that you appreciated?
11. Who has a problem that the rest of the family might be able to help with?
12. What's a book you're reading now or have read during the past year?
13. What are two things other people can do to make you happy?
14. What's something you're looking forward to?
15. If you could be granted three wishes, what would they be?
16. How can someone help you get out of a bad mood?
17. What is the most courageous thing you've ever done?
18. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
19. How do you know if someone is the right person for you to marry?
20. What does "being in love" mean to you?
21. What does "success" mean to you?
22. Who is someone that you admire? Why?
23. If you had \$100 to give to charity, who would you give it to?
24. If you could have dinner with anyone from history who would it be? Why?
25. What's one mistake you regret? What do you wish you had done differently?
26. Where would you most like to go on vacation?
27. What's a way you've changed in the past year (or two years)?
28. What is one of the hard things about being your age?
29. If your house was on fire, what is one thing you would try to pick up on the way out?
30. How did you get started (with a hobby, a sport, raising a family, your career or mission in life...)?
31. Share a happy or funny childhood memory.
32. Dear Abby: Read a letter to an advice columnist, but don't read the answer until everyone has had a chance to say the advice they'd give. Sample letter: "Dear Abby, I'm 14, I'm pregnant, and I'm scared to death to tell my parents. What should I do?"
33. New Year's: What are two goals you have for the year?
34. Looking back: What were two highlights of the past year (this summer, this winter)?
35. Bouncing question: One person asks another a question (such as any of the ones on this list), then that person asks someone else a different question, and so on, until everybody has been asked one. (If you don't wish to answer the questions, request another).
36. One-word topics: Choose any topic (school, sports, TV, movies, friends, heroes, clothes, God, prayer, decisions, music, politics, etc.) Anyone (in any order) can say anything about the topic that comes to mind.

Other Conversation Resources:

Journal in a Jar:

<http://www.everydaycheapskate.com/marys-perspective/give-the-legacy-of-a-life-history/>

Family Dinner Project:

<http://thefamilydinnerproject.org/conversation/>

Beauty and Bedlam:

<http://beautyandbedlam.com/conversation-starter-questions/>

Building Families across the Globe: Korean Adoption at FCA

Since 1982, Family & Children's Agency (FCA) has helped build more than 2,000 families by placing South Korean children with American families. FCA maintains a long standing partnership with the Social Welfare Society of Seoul (SWS), one of only four private placement agencies in South Korea. The bond between FCA and SWS stems from each organization's respect of each other's culture and commitment to providing support to everyone touched by adoption.

"We are two like minded agencies," said Mary Kate Locke, Director of Adoption and Prevention Services at FCA. "We invest time to meet with adoptive children and families. Our knowledge of Korean culture also helps prepare our families for the adoption process."

One of the benefits of the Korean Adoption program at FCA is that it is part of a larger human service agency that also offers pre-adoptive information and education, preparation of adoption home studies and post-adoption support. FCA has more than 70 years of experience and its knowledge of human services is unparalleled.

To learn more about eligibility and the adoption process, please visit www.FamilyAndChildrensAgency.org or call (203) 586-2365.



KOREAN ADOPTION

For more than 30 years we have guided families through adoption while partnering with the Social Welfare Society (SWS) in South Korea.



Build Your Family With
FCA

LEARN MORE ABOUT SOUTH KOREA ADOPTION
FamilyandChildrensAgency.org
(203) 855-8765

Family Connections, Inc. Achieves Hague Accreditation from the Council on Accreditation

written by Renee Hettich, MA, LMSW

Families seeking to adopt internationally will be pleased to know that Family Connections, Inc. is an authorized New York State Adoption Agency that has achieved Hague Accreditation from Council on Accreditation (COA). This achievement demonstrates Family Connection's continuing commitment to children and adoptive families.

Hague Accreditation by the COA is a national qualification that attests to Family's Connections, Inc. compliance with the ethical and moral standards of practice in international adoption as set by the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption treaty and the U.S. Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000. The Hague Convention established specific practice standards in regard to international adoption which all Hague Accredited agencies must meet. These standards establish safeguards for children and prospective adoptive families to ensure that intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child. The standards prevent the abduction, exploitation, sale, or trafficking of children and provides protections for prospective adoptive parents regarding the adoption process and expense. The Council on Accreditation completed an extensive and exhaustive investigation of the practices of Family Connections, Inc. to ensure that the Agency's services are compliant with Hague standards and that the Agency provides quality, ethical services that are in the best interest of children, protect children from exploitation, and ensure quality service to prospective adoptive families.

Family Connections, Inc.'s Hague Accreditation allows the Agency to continue to provide home study and post-adoption supervision services for families who are adopting internationally. Family Connections, has supported hundreds of adoptive international families since 1994 and is considered an expert in the international adoption process and the successful transition of children into adoptive families. The United States federal government (specifically the Department of State) requires that any adoption agency providing international adoption services to be Hague Accredited through the Council on Accreditation. Family Connections is pleased to be able to continue to help foreign orphans find forever families.

Family Connections provides home study investigations and post-adoption support for families adopting internationally. The Agency works cooperatively with International Adoption Placement Agencies throughout the country. Most International Adoption Placement Agencies are located outside of New York State. Thus most adoptive families must have the home study and post-adoption support services provided by a New York State authorized and Hague Accredited agency like Family Connections, Inc. International Adoption Placement Agencies must also be Hague Accredited by the Council on Accreditation. These Placement Agencies identify children for adoption in foreign countries, refer children for adoption to prospective adoptive parents, and facilitate the international adoption process. Family Connections has relationships with many International Adoption Placement Agencies and can work with any International Adoption Placement Agency of the adoptive family's choosing.

Family Connections would be honored to support your family's plans to adopt a child through international adoption. To learn more about international adoption please visit the Family Connection's website at www.adoptfamilyconnections.org or contact the Agency at 1-800-535-5556 or info@adoptfamilyconnections.org. Family Connections, Inc. looks forward to supporting your family's adoption plans.

Hague Accredited



CREDIBILITY • INTEGRITY • ACHIEVEMENT



A BIRTH MOTHER A VERY SPECIAL PERSON

Every birth mother is a special individual who chooses to give life to her child and then give life to a new family through adoption. She gives her most precious life (her baby) to a loving couple who will forever rejoice in the miracle of the child and who will be forever grateful to her for entrusting them with her child. Every birth mother and every child is a precious gift. So, who is a birth mother? She is any woman who is faced with an unplanned pregnancy and who may not be ready or able to parent the child. She may be a teenager, young adult or mature woman. She may be single or involved in a committed relationship. She may be economically secure or financially unstable. She may be from any ethnic heritage. She may be a victim of assault or abuse. She may be well educated or a student of life. She may be supported by loving family or experience difficult or abusive relationships. She may be healthy or experience physical health, mental health and/or addiction concerns. Every birth mother is unique, but they all have common traits. Every birth mother makes a loving and selfless choice to give life to her child. Every birth mother loves their baby. Each birth mother has the ability to look beyond themselves and consider

the best interests of their child above their own needs. Every birth mother has the forethought to plan for their child in the making of an adoption plan with adoptive parents. Birth mothers are willing to experience the emotional loss of their child in exchange for the peaceful feeling of knowing their birth child is treasured in their adoptive home. Many birth mothers also stand up against family members, friends, and society pressures that question or negatively judge their decision to make an adoption plan for their child. Every birth mother is loving, courageous, sacrificial, thoughtful, proactive, selfless, ...

Each birth mother faces choices. The first choice a birth mother makes is to give life to her child. She then must decide what is in the best interests of her child and herself – should she parent the child or make an adoption plan for the child. There will be many factors that influence her decision about parenting. For example, does she have the financial resources needed to raise a child, does she have the support of the birth father or other family members in parenting, can she provide a safe environment for the child (e.g. free from abuse and drugs), is she physically and mentally healthy, and is she mature enough to parent a child?

If the birth mother decides that adoption is the right choice for her child and herself, she will have many options to consider. She may wish to have a closed (confidential) adoption in which she and the adoptive family do not know each other and have no contact before or after the adoption. She may want to have a semi-open adoption where she chooses the adoptive family for her child. She then may decide to get to know the family prior to the adoption. After the adoption, she would then receive pictures and updates regarding the child throughout the child's life. The birth mother may also wish to have an open adoption with the adoptive family. She would pick the family for her child, spend time getting to know the family before the adoption and then have an on-going relationship with the child and adoptive family after the adoption. The birth mother and adoptive family would periodically exchange pictures and letters and have face-to-face visitations. There are many options within adoption. The birth mother designs her child's adoption and makes choices that are in the best interests of her child and herself.

Every birth mother is an exceptional woman who makes life-changing decisions. It is with tremendous respect and admiration that we say “thank you” to every birth mother who makes the decision to give their child life and their child a family through adoption.

Written by, Anita F. Stevens, Executive Director of Family Connections, Inc. , a New York State authorized adoption agency and by Renee Hettich, MA, LMSW. Adoption Social Worker. For over twenty-two years, Anita has had the honor of supporting birth mothers as they make adoption plans for the children. Renee parents three children whom she adopted. She honors her children's birth parents everyday as she rejoices in each of her children's lives.

Families Wanting & Waiting to Adopt

If you are considering placing your child for adoption, there are many families who are waiting to share their love with a child. Each family has been investigated and prepared by Family Connections, Inc., an adoption agency, to ensure that your child would be nurtured in a loving and safe home. Each family would be honored for you to consider them as parents for your child. You can learn a little about each family in the following pages. To learn more, please contact Family Connections at 800-535-5556 or visit www.adoptfamilyconnections.org.

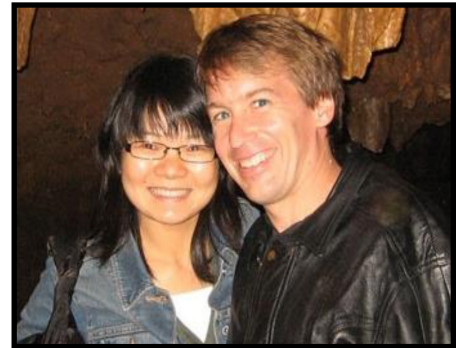
Gerald & Sarah



Danny & Trisha



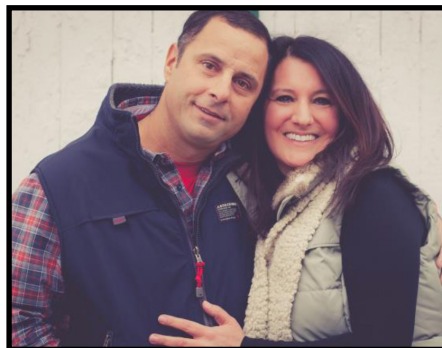
Carl & Yvonne



Rich & Randi



Frank & Lisa



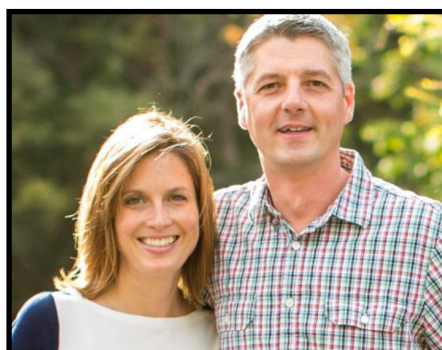
Mike & Jessica



Sean & Carla



Steven & Kim



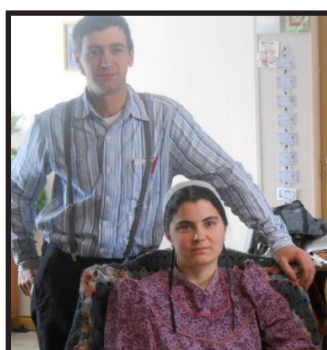
Dan & Jennifer



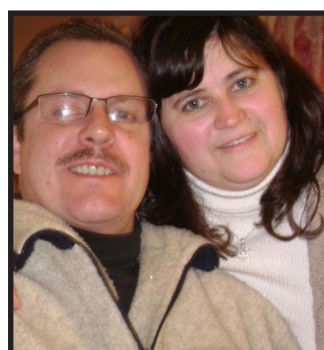
Dennis & Jennifer



Nelson & Esther



Rick & Tammy



Eric & Keri



Gerald & Sarah



We're Sarah and Gerald and we are hoping to expand our family! We have been inseparable for ten years and married for six. We have a loving relationship and support each other in all that we set out to do! We promise to provide a safe, secure, and happy home for your birth child.

Parenting Philosophy: We believe in the importance of love, respect, honesty, compassion, and hard work. We encourage our children to try new things and explore individual interests and abilities. We do this using love and

laughter and always keeping clear and open communication.

Our Family: We have a sweet, loving two-year old daughter who came into our lives through adoption. We are eager to expand our family and share our love and commitment with another child. We are very close with our extended family. Sarah's parents live down the street. Both her brothers and her sister make trips home to visit often! Gerald's mother, sister and brother-in-law live fairly close as well!



Our Home and Community: We live in a friendly, suburban community in a quiet neighborhood in Central New York. Our street has many young families whose children all play together. Near our home is a community park where we spend our time watching our daughter play. Our school district is well respected.

Our Professions: Sarah is a second grade teacher and has been teaching for ten years. Gerald is a high school special education teacher who also coaches high school football and track.

Our Hobbies: Sarah likes to garden, paint, and do yoga while Gerald's hobbies include playing indoor soccer, working out, and coaching. We both love to spend time playing outdoors as a family and taking walks together. We also enjoy having family over, especially for barbecues in the summer weather.

We are incredibly thankful for you taking the time to learn more about us.



Danny & Trisha

Hello! We are Danny and Trisha and we live in southern New York. We have been married for ten years and are very excited to begin this new journey with you. We are excited to start our family.

Parenting Philosophy: We were both raised in Christian families. We will raise our child to show respect to others and to be open and honest. Each person is unique and we want to allow our child to be themselves and to be the best that they can be. We each had loving families growing up and we want to give that to our child. We speak Spanish and are planning to raise our child bi-lingual.



Our Family: Family is important to us. Danny has a large family that lives near us and we get to see them often. Trisha is an only child but has a large extended family with several relatives that have adopted. Adoption is valued in our families. Danny has a daughter who is now 23 and married. She lives nearby and is very excited for another addition to the family.

Our Home: We live on a quiet neighborhood street. There are lots of kids always out riding their bikes and it is very safe. We have lived in our home for 10 years. We have easy access to New York City.

Our Professions: Trisha is a Special Education Teacher who works with children with Autism. Danny works at Mercedes Benz as a service advisor. They both find their jobs rewarding.

Our Activities: We love to travel and learn about different cultures and eat new foods! We have been to over 15 countries. We have a passion for missions. We look forward to showing our child the world! Danny enjoys working outside in the garage. Trisha enjoys reading, crafting, and decorating.



We hope that you have seen a small glimpse of who we are and we look forward to getting to know you better. We are excited to shower love on our child and thank you for the gift that you are giving.

Carl & Yvonne



Hi! We are Carl and Yvonne. Thank you so much for getting to know us. Together for ten years, married for seven, we are a loving and committed couple eager to welcome a child into our laughter-filled home. We admire you for your decision, and want to assure you that our adopted child will be embraced with love and caring.

Parenting Philosophy: We believe that every child should feel safe, secure, and loved. We will raise our child to be a good person - kind and compassionate toward others. We also strongly believe in

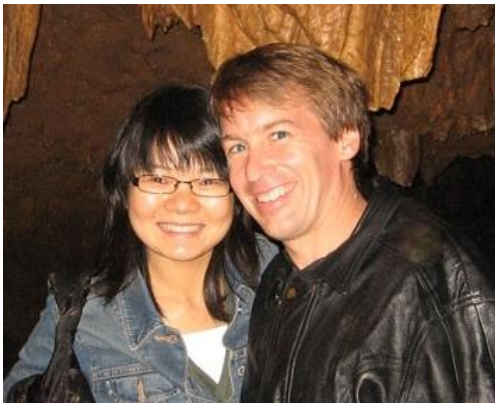
education and hard work – both of us grew up in families where our parents encouraged us to study and pursue our own interests, and we want to pass that on to our child.

Our Family: We are very close with our family – our parents, two brothers, sister, and their children. Yvonne reads to her three nephews over Skype every week and loves making them laugh by pretending to be different types of animals. In the winters, Carl's extended family gets together in Florida for games and long walks, where the children chase the family dogs up and down the beach. In the summers, we visit Yvonne's family in China, for excellent food and games, where the children chase Carl up and down the parks.

Our Home: We live in a two-bedroom apartment in a quiet, tree-lined street in New York City. It is right around the corner from a public library and park. Excellent schools, museums, and children's theaters are all nearby. We have many friends nearby with small children, so our child will grow up with plenty of playmates of very diverse backgrounds.



Our Professions: We are both professors and love teaching. (Carl was a kindergarten teacher right after college). Opening a young person's mind to new experiences and ideas is one of the most rewarding jobs in the world. Working in universities, we are fortunate to have schedules that allow us flexibility to raise our child and share our experiences with them.



Our Activities: We love travelling in the United States and around the world. When we travel, we like hiking and biking in beautiful landscapes. At home, Yvonne likes cooking and doing yoga. Carl enjoys playing chess, cards, and watching old 1980s movies.

In Closing: We know that this is a difficult decision for you. We admire you for your decision to consider adoption. We wish all the best for you and your child.

Rich & Randi

Hi! We are Rich & Randi. It was with much happiness and optimism that we share information about ourselves with you. Rich and I have known each other for 9 years and have been married for 5 amazing years. To be blessed with a baby through adoption fills Rich and I with so much love and fulfillment.

Parenting Philosophy: We have the honor of having so many children in our lives, nieces, nephews, and close family friends. Nothing is more important than being there for a child. It is a true gift to be able to raise, nurture, educate and love a child. Rich and I both view this as the greatest blessing we could ever have. To welcome a baby into our home and lives, providing them with a loving, positive, family environment is our greatest wish.



Our Family: Sharing life's moments with our wonderful families is a priority. We are fortunate to have family close by that we share so much with. We also have family further away which makes for exciting visits and new experiences. No matter where we are, near or far, all of our family is supportive and excited with open arms to embrace a new member of our family.



Our Home: We have lived in our beautiful home for 7 years. It is in a safe suburban community with one of the best school districts in the country. The neighborhood children love to come and play in our backyard playground and basketball court. We fill our home with love and laughter. We look forward to welcoming a baby into our nurturing home.

Our Professions: Rich has his own business, so he is always nearby and available. His success will allow me to be a full-time stay-at-home mom. I also have the freedom and flexibility to help out with the business. Thanks to Rich's hard work he is able to be successful doing a job that he loves.

Our Activities: We enjoy many fun activities. We look forward to the summer when we can enjoy our boat with family and friends. Our dog Cooper enjoys boating and taking long walks with us. We also like to garden. Rich loves golf and Randi enjoys fitness activities.

It would be our honor and life responsibility to parent a child. Thank you for considering us.



Frank & Lisa



Hello! We are Lisa and Frank and we are so excited that you've chosen to read about our family! We have been married for almost 17 years, have 3 amazing boys and are very much hoping to welcome a little princess into our lives through adoption. It has been a long-standing dream to continue expanding our family, as we have always dreamed of a household full of children.

with a life full of unconditional love, the opportunity to grow into their own individual selves, the encouragement to pursue their dreams, the tools needed to help achieve their goals, and the support necessary for them to live full, happy and healthy lives. We are proactive about instilling solid morals, as well as teaching them the importance of empathy, honesty and respect.

Parenting Philosophy: Our promise, as parents, is to provide all of our children

Our Family: We have been blessed with 3 beautiful boys and a very close-knit extended family. Both sets of grandparents are actively involved in our lives, as are aunts, uncles and cousins. Frank's sister actually lives right next door with her 2 children, so these first cousins are literally able to grow up together. Relatives on both sides are beyond thrilled at the prospect of welcoming a baby girl into our family!

Our Home: We live in a spacious, contemporary home in a suburb of Upstate NY. Our yard has plenty of room to run and play and the neighborhood is filled with many young families. Our community has a "small town" feel and includes several parks and playgrounds, a recreation center, many major retailers, a wonderful school system, and a number of well-known colleges. We are fortunate to have an abundance of family-friendly activities, for kids of all ages, so close to home.



Our Professions: Frank has a college degree in civil and environmental engineering and is the owner and president of his family's masonry business. He enjoys the flexibility of being self-employed. Lisa has a Master's degree in education. She is a high school librarian and is currently working in the town where they live. She enjoys connecting students with great literature and being able to empower them with knowledge.



Our Hobbies/Interests: Without a doubt, spending quality time as a family is our favorite thing to do! We enjoy going to amusement and water parks, hanging out at the beach, visiting

zoos and aquariums, swimming, boating and bike riding. Frank enjoys cooking and playing in his soccer league, as well as coaching our son's soccer team, and bass fishing. Lisa enjoys reading, spa dates, lunches and live concerts with her closest girlfriends.

Mike & Jessica

Hi, we are Mike and Jessica and we have been married five years! We want to provide a loving, stable environment where our child can grow to realize all the potential they have to be successful in life and make a difference in this world.

Parenting Philosophy: We want to be real and genuine, and provide our child with the opportunities we had growing up. We grew up celebrating our successes, learning from our mistakes, and laughing a lot along the way. We know that each day is a new opportunity to succeed and that the love and support of a family can make all the difference in our child's life.



Our Family: We both grew up in families where being together brought the best childhood memories, taking special trips and eating dinner together every day was very important. Jessica is one of seven children and Mike is the youngest of three, both families are very close knit. Our parents are excited to be Grandparents again as well as the rest of our extended family, many of who live close by! We have seen the joy of adoption in our families and know this is what we want to do. Our child will have many cousins who came to our family through adoptions!



Our Home: We live in a new home in a vibrant community in Upstate NY. There are lots of great parks, schools and health care available nearby. We live close to family, friends and our church community. We also own a camper that we call our second home, giving us the best of town and country living!

Our Professions: Mike works as an accountant. Jessica works for a government agency supporting education and health care issues.

Our Activities: We really enjoy having fun, we work hard but we like to play hard too. We love to team up to cook and bake. We love being outside, especially at camp when we can go swimming, boating, fishing, hiking, or play outdoor games. Jessica likes to do arts and crafts, and Mike enjoys woodworking and photography. In the winter we like to go sledding and snow tubing and do movie nights. We both are involved with our church where Jessica teaches Sunday school and Mike serves as a greeter. We love to take vacations to the beach and Disney!



We thank you for making such a brave decision in choosing adoption and for considering us. Please know that this child will be safe, nurtured, and loved.

Jennifer & Dennis



We are Dennis and Jen from Upstate NY. We have been together for 11 years and married for 7. We are a fun loving committed couple who are excited about becoming parents through adoption! We have tried for 3 years to have a child and have not been able to conceive. It is our hope you will get a glimpse into our lives through this profile.

Parenting Philosophy: Dennis and I were fortunate to grow up in nurturing, loving environments where we were encouraged to try new things, be independent thinkers and confident individuals. We will do the same for a child and hope to instill the values of hard work, honesty, respect, compassion and kindness through positive communication, encouragement and validation.

Our Family: Family is extremely important to us. Dennis' parents live nearby. Jennifer's family lives

about 40 minutes away. We get together often for family dinners, to celebrate holidays, birthdays, or just because. Our families are excited and incredibly supportive of our decision to adopt and anxiously await a child to join our family. We also have an extensive network of friends who are supportive of our plan to adopt and who we can call upon for advice and for assistance.

Our Home: We live in a beautiful spacious home in the country on 6 acres of land with a big pond in the back. We have a huge yard with apple trees, blueberry bushes and lots of room to play. We have four dogs that are well behaved and love children. We rescued all the dogs.



Our Professions: Jennifer has been a teacher for fourteen years and is currently taking courses in Educational Administration so she can someday become a Principal. Dennis is employed at an Automotive Repair Facility as a Technician near their home.



Hobbies: We enjoy spending time together. In the nice weather we are generally either touring the countryside on the motorcycle, boating on one of the nearby lakes or enjoying a bonfire in our back yard with the neighbors. We enjoy fishing in our pond and like taking the dogs for long hikes in the woods. Jennifer enjoys cooking and reading while Dennis enjoys working on projects in the house and hunting.

Steve & Kimberly

Hello, we are Steve and Kimberly and we live in the Albany, NY area. We have been together for five years and look forward to the day when we can add a child to our happy family.

Parenting Philosophy: We believe that children should be allowed to explore the world around them with a sense of independence, and know that they are protected and loved. We would encourage our child to come to know people from all walks of life so that they will be understanding, compassionate and giving as an adult. We believe strongly in helping others and would like our child to share this belief as well. Most of all we want our child to have the freedom to choose their path in life that makes them happy.



Our Family: We are both close to our families and have twelve young nieces and nephews between us, including two who were adopted. Family events are always filled with children playing and laughing. We take advantage of any opportunity to be together.



Our Home: We have a charming 4 bedroom cape-style home on a quiet tree-lined street in a family neighborhood. We live on a dead-end street next to a large park with a playground and water sprinkler play area. There are children in our neighborhood and lots of fun activities just blocks away including indoor rock climbing, dance studios and little league baseball fields.

Our Professions: Kimberly is a professor at a local college where she loves to teach American history. She has a flexible school schedule. Steve works as a partner in a logistics company that specializes in moving large pieces of equipment for power plants.

Our Activities: We both love to travel and have visited many places including Europe, Asia and the Caribbean. We enjoy hiking with our dogs, biking, going to theme parks and the beach. We both love reading. Kimberly likes antiques, auctions and baking. Steve likes attending sporting events and music.



Sean & Carla



Hi! Our names are Sean and Carla and we live in a suburb in Upstate NY. We've been married for almost 13 years and live in the hometown where we grew up. We are so excited for the possibility of completing our family through adoption.

Parenting Philosophy: There is nothing that has brought us greater joy than raising our children. We have a home filled with much love and tons of laughter. We help foster a loving and caring relationship between our kids while instilling in them the morals and values that we were taught from our parents. Our desire is for our children to know that we are the ones that they can come to and discuss anything.

Our Family: After a difficult start to beginning our family, we have since been blessed with our biological son Matthew, and our beautiful daughter Emma, who we adopted at birth. Matthew is 5 years old and has the sweetest heart imaginable. He is kind, smart, and fun-loving. Emma is almost 3 years old and has the most amazing personality! She is full of spunk and has brought so much laughter into our home. Family is so important to us and we are fortunate to have a close relationship with our parents, our siblings, and our nieces and nephews.

Our Home: We built our home 12 years ago with the dream of someday having three little kids running around. Our home is in a nice neighborhood with many young families. We have a large backyard where the kids and our dog love to play. We are fortunate to live and teach in a wonderful community with a well-respected school district.



Our Professions: Sean has taught high school Biology for 16 years and also spent 10 years coaching soccer and lacrosse. Carla is a fourth grade teacher who loves working with young children. We both truly love our jobs and are blessed to be able to spend vacations together as a family.

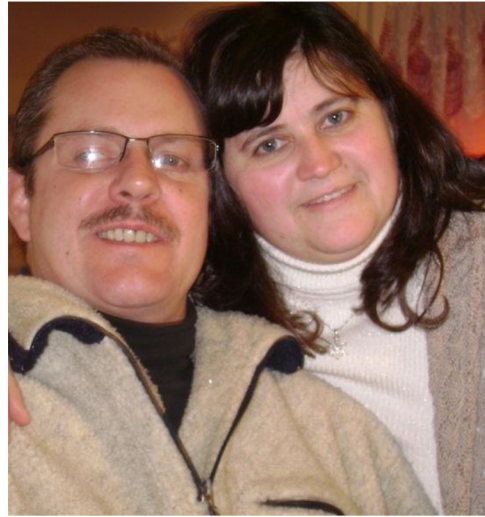


Our Activities: We both enjoy spending time outdoors. We love to hike and go running. Sean likes to read, enjoys playing guitar, and loves sports. Carla enjoys playing volleyball, listening to music, and cooking. We both love to get together with our family and friends. As a family, we really just love to have fun. We love the ocean and try to get there once a year.

We hope this peek into our lives has helped you learn a little bit about who we are as a couple and as a family. Please know that any child who comes into our lives will be loved so much, and would be gaining the life-long gift of the most wonderful big brother and sister.

Rick & Tammy

Hi our names are Rick and Tami. We are so excited at the thought of adopting a child! We look forward to providing a supportive and loving home for a child that we will love with all of our hearts. Your child would get a stable home, great education, and be surrounded by family, joy, and lots of laughter. We understand that adoption is an extraordinary gift and we would be honored to be able to complete our family in this way.



Parenting Philosophy: We look forward to raising our child with love and attention. Teaching them to be respectful and considerate of others and to give them the kind of attention they require to grow up healthy, happy, confident and able to make good choices when they are an adult. We will help them find their strengths and ultimately become a success in whatever they were born to do.

Our Family: We have been married for fifteen years. Spending time celebrating special occasions, birthdays, and holidays with our extended family of siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews is very important to us. We are a very close family and love this time together. We are grateful that our child will be loved and welcomed by so many special people in our lives. Our families are extremely supportive of our adoption and our child will have lots of cousins to play with.

Our Home: We live in a safe, kid-friendly suburban neighborhood with plenty of parks and playgrounds nearby. We are also close to several lakes and bike trails. Our home is a cozy cape cod style home with 3 bedrooms and a large yard with plenty of room to play. We have a number of families with young children in our neighborhood.



Our Professions: Rick has a certification in HVAC (Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning & Refrigeration) and is currently working as a Maintenance Technician and driver for a national real estate company. Tami has a Bachelor's degree in Accounting and is currently working as a computer programmer for a state agency.

Our Activities: We love the great outdoors. Taking our dog for a walk is one of our daily activities. Camping, fishing, and hiking are some of the things we like to do in the summer. Taking our kayaks out on the lake is one of our favorite things we do together. We love to explore and travel. Skiing and ice skating with our nieces and nephews are a given in the winter. We look forward to summer vacations every year. One of Tami's hobbies is scrapbooking all of our memories.

Nelson & Esther

Hi! We are Nelson and Esther and live in beautiful rural community in Upstate New York. We are looking forward to becoming parents through adoption and are ready to cherish a child.

Parenting Philosophy: Children need love, love, and more love. They need a structured routine, and they need to know where their boundaries are. If they overstep these boundaries, they need to know their parents love them enough to apply discipline.

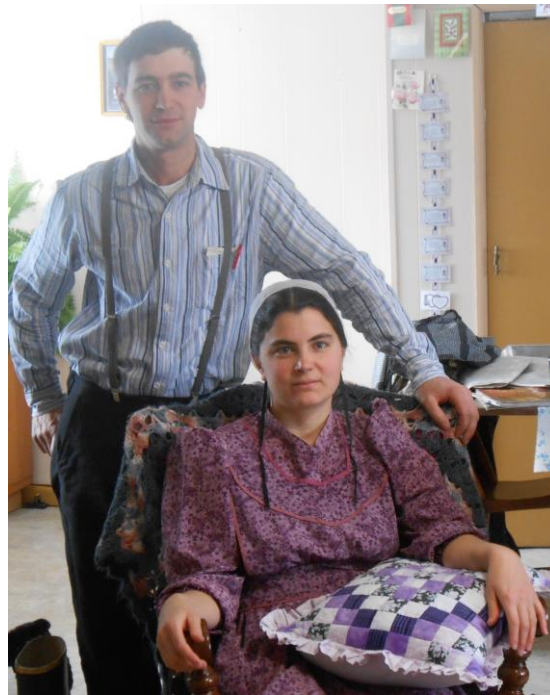
Our Family: We both grew up in large families. Nelson has thirteen siblings and Esther has nine brothers and sisters. Between us we have twenty-four cute and sweet nieces and nephews. We are blessed to still have both sets of parents and lots of aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Our Home: We live on a 122 acre farm with fields and woods. The buildings sit on a hill crest and we have a “million dollar” view of the valley below. It is our enjoyment to keep our farm neat in keeping with our beautiful surroundings.



Our Activities: We both enjoy going for drives along quiet scenic country roads or going for rambling walks through woods and fields. I (Esther) always keep my binoculars handy as I am an avid birdwatcher. I also enjoy flower and vegetable gardening, sewing, quilting, collecting stamps, and scrapbooking. Nelson’s greatest hobby is horses - raising them and training them. He also likes to raise exotic fowl. We are both bookworms.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. We would feel privileged to parent your child and would endeavor to give him/her the happiest life possible. We pray for you as you make these difficult decisions on behalf of your precious child.



Our Professions: We raise sheep and have around 110 ewes. We enjoy bottle feeding the occasional orphaned lamb! We also raise heifers, goats, and horses and have a pony and mini-donkey. Our farm shop keeps us busy to keep customers happy.



Dan & Jennifer



Hello! Our names are Dan and Jennifer and we live in a rural community in Upstate NY. We have been married for 10 years and are fortunate to have two healthy and energetic boys. We wish to complete our family with a little girl.

Parenting Philosophy: We feel it is crucial for our kids to be loving, respectful, and honest. We encourage our kids to be open with us about anything that they are curious or concerned about

in the world. We teach our children that all people are different in this world and to be respectful of similarities and differences that they may have. We teach our children to be caring to others.

Our Home and Community: We live in a colonial home. We have 17 acres of land which is plenty of room for our children, dogs, and chickens to run and enjoy the countryside. Our children attend school in a wonderful district with excellent teachers. Our school district is very diverse which we feel is important for our children.



Our Family: Our oldest son Daniel is 8 years old and our youngest child Jakob is 5 years old. They both enjoy swimming, playing with Legos, and learning about animals. As a family we enjoy playing outside, swimming in our pool, and playing with our animals (3 dogs, 1 cat, and 6 chickens). We spend a lot of time with Dan's parents, younger sister and her husband who all live nearby. Jennifer's family lives out of state, but we see them on special occasions.



Our Professions: Dan has been a full time stay at home dad for the past 7 years, and is now returning to college to become a Registered Nurse. Jennifer is a physician. Jennifer was an active duty Army physician for 6 years and spent 1 year deployed to Afghanistan.

Our Activities: We both enjoy spending time being outdoors and swimming in the pool with our boys. Dan enjoys reading, golfing, and going to the movies. Jennifer enjoys running and biking.

Eric & Keri

We feel honored and grateful that you are allowing us to share our story with you. We both dreamed of being parents and can't wait to take trips to the zoo, teaching our child how to ride a bike, or scaring away monsters under the bed. We both have family members who were adopted, and this is why we are choosing adoption to make our dream of parenthood come true.

Parenting Philosophy: We are committed to instilling in our child good morals and values such as working hard, being responsible, and respecting the differences of others. We both believe that it is important to provide a child with a stable home where communication is clear and affection is shown regularly. We will teach our child about the importance of family and spending time together.



Family: We both have a small, but very close family. Keri's mother lives less than a mile away, and she often comes over for dinner. Eric's parents and sister live on the west coast, but they talk and visit often. Both sides of our families get along – we have even all gone on vacation together!

Home & Community: We have a cozy, happy, noisy, joyful home. We have three kid-loving dogs. In the winter there is often a fire in the fireplace, and we love watching the dogs

frolic in the snow. In the good weather, we love to take walks in our neighborhood, grill on our back deck, or read on our front porch.

Professions: Keri is a teacher and works hard to be the best teacher she can be. Eric is in law enforcement and enjoys his job.

Hobbies: We both love movies, plays, catching a hockey or baseball game, music, traveling, and playing with our dogs. Keri is a baker and loves to read and play kickball. Eric loves to ride his bike, play golf, and play board games with his friends.

Thank you for learning a little bit about what we have to offer your child. We promise that your child will always be our highest priority.





Adopting from Pakistan

By Anita F. Stevens

Executive Director, Family Connections Inc.

Family Connections Inc. is a Primary Provider for Pakistani Adoptions

Adopting an orphan from Pakistan can be a wonderful opportunity for United States Citizens of Pakistani heritage. This international process allows an opportunity for a person of Pakistani heritage to adopt a child who shares their religious and cultural heritage. The overall costs of an adoption from Pakistan are less than the average domestic US adoption and most other international adoptions. The US tax credit of \$13,300+ for adoption will also mitigate some of the cost for the Pakistani adoption.

Traditionally, before the United States signed on to the Hague Convention on Adoption and implemented the Universal Accreditation Act in 2014, US citizens of Pakistani heritage who wanted to adopt an orphan child traveled to Pakistan and completed an independent adoption or private adoption as there were and still are no US agencies with traditional International adoption programs in Pakistan. They were required to have a home study but no other agency assisted them with their adoption. With the passing of the Universal Accreditation Act (UAA) in 2012, and its implementation in 2014, Pakistani families can no longer complete an adoption from Pakistan without using a Primary Provider.

A Primary Provider is a US adoption agency or person that is authorized or licensed in their own state and is Hague

Accredited through the Council on Accreditation. This that the agency or person has been accredited or approved according to the federal government standards (Hague Standards) to provide or identify the provider of the adoption services associated with an International adoption. The Primary Provider can work with families from any state in the United States. It can also work with US citizens living abroad. The Primary Provider provides direct services or supervises the other agencies (such as your home study provider) that provide the adoption services associated with the placement of a child from Pakistan. The Primary Provider is responsible to assure that any services provided by themselves or any agency/person they supervise is compliant with the standards of the Hague Convention on Adoption. The Pakistan process of obtaining Guardianship of a child, immigrating the child to the United States, finalizing the adoption placement in the United States and obtaining a Citizenship Certificate is still very similar. The major difference is that the United States requires a Primary Provider to supervise and assist with the process. This regulatory assistance is in place to prevent abuse and trafficking of children. A competent Primary Provider should also make the adoption process a more supportive process for you, the adoptive parents.

In Pakistan, the only entity with statutory authority to determine if a child is in need of guardianship and to determine

if an applicant is a suitable applicant for the child is the Pakistan means Family Court Judge that has jurisdiction in the region where an orphan child is located. This same Pakistan Family Court is also the only entity that can place a relative child in a family. The Pakistan Guardianship placement of a child is not recognized by the United States as a full and final adoption so all child guardianship placements have to be compliant with three basic standards.

1. The placement of a child has to be ordered by the Family Court Judge who makes a ruling that the child needs a guardian and that you are the appropriate guardian.
2. The Family Court Judge must also give permission for the child to travel to the US for adoption.
3. The child's social history documentation needs to indicate that the child is a "legal orphan" according to the Immigration and Naturalization Act.

In traditional adoption programs, the placing agency/Primary Provider creates a child study for the child. In Pakistan only the Family Court can create a child study. Sometimes the Family Court Judge orders the preparation of documents that resemble a child study and sometimes they don't. Charitable orphanages and government orphanages sometimes provide families with known social information. This information is limited as children can be found in cribs provided by a charitable organization or in less desirable places and their parents are unknown. The information regarding the available children is often limited to when the child was found, by whom, and the date the child enters the orphanage. No medical, genetic or social information is available. The Primary Provider can guide you through the Pakistan process but they do not have any legal authority to place children in your home.

Most charitable and government orphanages try to provide families with children who have the potential for normal growth and development but inherent risks exist in Pakistan similar to the risks of adopting from any other international country. Before you make a commitment to a child, the orphanages may allow you to meet and see the child and allow you to take the child to a Pakistan Pediatrician for a medical examination. The family can also hire a US pediatrician familiar with medical issues in international adoption and can consult with them while they are in country. This will mitigate but not eliminate the risks.

The Primary Provider is also responsible to supervise the post placement process to make sure that you receive support and help adjusting to your child and finalizing the guardianship placement of your child thereby making the adoption full and final in the United States and allowing your child to become a US citizen. The post placement costs are prepaid by you upon completion of your home study. This is a practice common to all international adoptions.

A family receives an IR 4 visa for the child to enter the United States. The IR 4 visa provides the child with a green card status for about one year. The Primary Provider can help you locate competent attorneys familiar with international adoption and US finalization. They can serve as a resource to you for education and support. The Primary Provider is responsible to

educate you and encourage you to obtain legal status for your child by way of finalization and obtaining the Certificate of Citizenship from the USCIS. You will also have to apply for a Social Security number for the child upon finalization. You can however claim your child as a dependent and the child will be covered under your health insurance (upon placement). You will not however receive your adoption tax credit until the tax year in which the child is finalized. All of this activity is supervised by the Primary Provider with the purpose of securing a child in a family and guiding you, the adoptive parents, through the maze of an inter country adoption.



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Adoptive Parents Most Frequently Asked Legal Questions

Written by: Brendan O'Shea, Esq.

Families considering adoption often have concerns regarding the law involving a birth parent's surrender, whether the birth father must be involved, whether post-adoption agreements are allowable, and certain financial/paperwork questions which arise after finalization.

While not intended to be exhaustive, I will attempt to provide a general outline which hopefully will provide clarity as you consider each of these issues.

Question: In an agency adoption, how are the rights of a biological parent voluntarily terminated?

In New York, a parent cannot sign a written surrender until after the child is born. The birth parent may sign a judicial surrender in the presence of a New York judge, which is final as soon as it is signed. Alternatively, the birth parent may sign an out-of-court surrender, which may be revoked within 30 days.

It is very important to keep in mind that the revocation of an out-of-court surrender, even within the 30-day time period, will not automatically lead to the return of the child to the consenting birth parent and the dismissal of the adoption. The birth parent must show that it is in the child's "best interests" to be returned to him/her. If the agency or the adoptive parents challenge the revocation, a hearing must be scheduled at which a judge decides whether it is in the child's best interests to be returned to the birth parent or to remain with the adoptive family.

The fact that the revoking party is the biological parent does not give the parent any advantage at a best interests hearing. In fact, a review of New York best interests hearings indicates that adoptive parents are far more likely to prevail than birth parents. This is due to the fact that the adoptive parents generally are more well-equipped than birth parents in the areas germane to a child's best interests (e.g. stability, income, employment, ability to care for child).

Question: What are the rights of unmarried birth fathers in New York?

A. Notice: An unwed father has the right to be notified of the adoption proceeding if he meets one or more of the following categories: (1) he has been adjudicated by a court as the father, (2) he has filed a notice of intent to claim paternity, (3) he is recorded on the birth certificate as the father, (4) he is living with the child and the child's mother is holding him out to be the father, (5) he is identified as the father by the mother in a written sworn statement, (6) he is married to the mother within six months after the child's birth but prior to her signing of a

consent or surrender, and/or (7) he has filed an acknowledgement of paternity. A so-called "noticed" father does not have the right to veto the adoption. Rather, a notice father only has the right to present testimony as to why he believes the adoption may not be in the child's best interests.

B. Consent: An unwed father has the legal right to veto an adoption of an infant (less than six months of age) only if he shows that: (1) during the pregnancy, he emotionally and financially supported the mother and that he planned for the child's birth, (2) he is ready, willing, and able to actually take custody of the child, and (3) that he took every possible avenue to assert his parental rights. A birth father that meets this test is known as a "consent father", since his consent to the adoption is required. In New York a birth mother is not under an obligation to identify the father. She may decide, for any number of reasons, not to identify him. In such a case, the adoptive family or the agency may be required to publish a "John Doe" legal notice in a local newspaper before being allowed to finalize the adoption. Please note that the birth mother's full name does not appear in such an advertisement. We find that we are able to locate birth fathers in approximately one-third to one-half of the domestic adoptions which we finalize. If the birth mother is willing to identify the father and provide his current whereabouts, it is always the best practice to attempt to communicate with him. Even if he does not wish to sign adoption papers, the Court which is finalizing the adoption needs to be assured that the birth father is fully aware of the birth mother's adoption plan. It is important that you consult with your attorney regarding this matter.

Question: Are co-called "contact" agreements valid in New York?

Many adoptive parents and birth parents make arrangements by which contact will be maintained after the child's placement. The most common type of plan is for the adoptive parents to provide photographs and written updates to the birth mother on a periodic basis. The photographs/letters are sent to the birth family through the agency or directly from the adoptive family to the birth parent(s). Visits between the birth parents and the child may also be agreed to. Such post-adoption contact agreements (PACAs) with respect to agency adoptions are recognized in New York, and recent legislation has made these agreements enforceable if they are in the child's best interests.

In addition, the New York Department of Health maintains an Adoption Information Registry database. A surrendering birth



parent may elect to have his/her name added to the database, indicating a wish to receive contact from the child once the child reaches the age of 18. The Department of Health will facilitate contact between the child and the birth parent after the child reaches the age of 18, but only if the child signifies a corresponding wish to begin communication with the biological parent.

Question: What is the status of the Federal Adoption Tax Credit?

The IRS currently allows an adoption tax credit for non-step-parent and non-surrogate adoption - both domestic and international.

Question: When does the family receive the child's birth certificate?

The birth certificate is not issued by the court which finalizes the adoption. Instead, as soon as the adoption is finalized, the court sends a written notice to the vital statistics department of the state of the child's birth. The notice confirms that the adoption has been completed and requests the issuance of a revised birth certificate showing the adoptive child's new name, and also showing the adoptive parent(s) as the legal parent(s).

For children born in New York, the birth certificate is usually mailed directly to the adoptive family. This is sometimes a lengthy process, and families have waited up to six months, or even longer, after finalization before receiving their child's birth certificate.

The Amendment Unit of the New York State Department of Health has indicated that birth certificate applications can be expedited if the family delivers a request via overnight mail to the following office: New York State Department of Health Amendment Unit, 800 North Pearl Street, Albany, NY 12204. However, the Amendment Unit advises that the family wait one month after finalization to give the court time to submit its paperwork. Thereafter the Amendment Unit advises that the family call (518) 474-2013 to inquire if the record has been amended before sending any inquiry. Our office has been advised

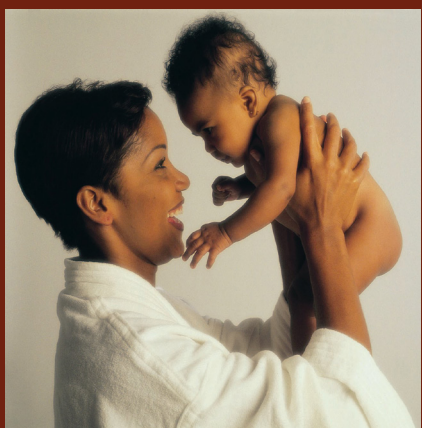
that expedited service will reduce the waiting time considerably, to perhaps 2-4 weeks.

To ensure a successful adoption, it is critical that the birth parent(s), adoptive parent(s), and agency have proper legal counsel. Each entity must be represented by a different attorney. Your attorney should be knowledgeable and experienced in the field of adoption. Like this author, many adoption legal professionals are members of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys.



Brendan O'Shea, Esq. is an attorney whose practice concentrates in the field of adoption, foster care, and custody. He is a member of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys and has represented adoptive families and birth parents for over thirty years. Brendan may be reached at (888) 432-7511 or boshea@gdwo.net.

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Talking With Your Child About Adoption

By Sue N., Adoptive Parent

As you prepare to adopt a child there are many things to get done, paperwork, fingerprinting and a home study visit and at this busy time you may not be thinking about how to talk with your child about their adoption. This is a subject you will want to read and learn more about before bringing your child home. The more prepared you are for your child's questions the easier it will be for you to talk with them when they start asking. Adoption used to be a subject not spoken about but times have changed and talking openly about adoption is more the norm. In domestic adoption it is more common to hear of adoptive parents and birth parents building relationships. While parenting your adopted child is no different than parenting a biological child in many ways, their unique story of how they came to be in your family is different than their birth family history, and their racial, cultural heritage. Using adoption terminology in everyday life can help your child feel comfortable about asking questions and answering the questions of others.

Gathering information from the beginning can help ease a child's mind later on. If you are fortunate enough to meet your child's birth parents you can learn a lot about your child's medical history, ethnic heritage and general knowledge about the birth parents. Storing this information, perhaps recording it in a journal, for a later date when questions arise will benefit both you and your child. If your child was adopted at an older age, they may have information they will want to share with you as their trust and bond with you forms. You will need to follow their lead and be sure to stay aware of their feelings about loyalty to you and their birth parents and the mixed feelings that may arise. Many adopted children fear it would hurt their parent's feelings if they ask questions about their birth parents and their adoption. Keeping an open and trusting relationship with your child will help them gain confidence in coming to you for information when they feel ready.

At a young age you can start reading adoption related books to your child to help them understand and take pride in the fact that the story of their birth and how they came into your family through adoption is uniquely theirs. By using adoption vocabulary at an early age your child can feel confident in their

adoption story. Having an adoption life story book telling the story of their adoption can help lead to discussions between children and parents. Your child's life story book can be pictures of when you first met your child, when they came home to your family, or pictures of their birth family. The book can tell their adoption story in a way that can help your child put the pieces together and make sense of their adoption while growing more comfortable with their history and the terminology of adoption. If your young child comes to you with questions, answer them honestly and briefly, they are not looking for complicated answers. Keep your answers simple and to the point, your child may ask another question or just say "ok" and skip off to play with no further interest. Just as your child grows and matures, so will their questions and thoughts about their adoption story. Preparing yourself for the tough questions is the best thing you can do, they will see a confidence in you and take comfort in knowing you are there for them.

Another thing to consider when talking with your child about their adoption story is that it is their story. This can be a very personal and private thing for a child and you need to talk with them about what they do and do not want you to share with others. It is important to keep sensitive information private and protected so that it cannot be used to harm them either intentionally or unknowingly. It is also good to teach your child how to respond to the many questions that can come from strangers. By talking with them about how to handle questions that may be awkward or too personal you are giving them the tools they need to feel confident and comfortable about their adoption story.

During a child's school age years there may be feelings about adoption that your child may not express to you. They may just make a statement in the midst of conversation about their perspective on why their birth parents placed them for adoption and it could be completely inaccurate information. They may create in their mind an idea of how their life began and where they come from. Adopted children will often fantasize about what their birth parents are like or why they placed them for adoption. I can remember my daughter asking me about the home she lived in before she lived with us and how old she was when we picked her up from there. Given that she came home from the hospital with us at one day old, I don't know why she thought she had lived anywhere else. Knowing she had been thinking about all the unknowns in her past, it was a good

opportunity to talk with her about where she was born and how she was immediately a part of our family. Even though this had been told to her several times throughout her toddler and younger years she had created a detail of her story very different from reality. This led to a great opportunity to once again discuss her adoption story and to help her understand her origins. We have always approached these discussions with the mindset that she will lead us with how much she wants to know and we would answer her questions honestly and with the amount of information she was ready to hear. Our daughter always seemed to have a stopping point where she would not want to hear any more information. We have tried to follow her lead because we don't want her to feel pressured to take on more information than she is ready for. Children will let you know when they have heard enough.

As your child approaches the teen years these questions can become more involved and sometimes difficult. The middle school years can bring family tree and family heritage projects from school, raising further questions about birth parents and ethnic heritage. This can be a time when your tween aged child may feel uncomfortable or confused about what to do with a project like a family tree. Reassure your child that their family tree is far reaching and can be anything they want it to be. In the past we have encountered teachers very open to the fact our child has a unique family background and some who are not so understanding of the complexities involved with adoption. The best thing to do at this point is to stand by your child in their decision about what they want to include in their family tree. The best policy is honesty and not to appear as though you are holding back information from your child. This can create parent and child trust issues and stress in your relationship. You want your child to turn to you for information and not go looking to outside sources for information. Sometimes these outside sources can provide your child with information they

may not be ready for or with inaccurate details that can cause more harm than good. As with all teen children social media is a big part of their lives and keeping track of their social media usage can help prevent problems for both parents and children alike. Children will often start searching social media for information on their birth parents and can, easier than you realize, find more information than they can handle during very formative years. If this is the case and you find yourself overwhelmed, reaching out for adoption related counseling can help. Having a non-biased person work with you and your child, can help both of you understand where the other is at and how to work together to keep a strong family relationship. As your child grows and matures their questions about their adoption will change and become more complex. There are many questions that you may want to consider and prepare for as your child's knowledge of his/her adoption story grows. Here are a few to consider:

Did my birth mother hold me or see me when I was born?

Did my birth mother love me or want me?

What name did my birth mother give me?

Do you think my birth parents ever think about me?

Did my birth parents have any other children?

Do my birth parents know anything about me?

The answers to these questions can lead to some serious and tough discussions that you might stumble through so thinking about them ahead of time and preparing how you will answer them will help relieve some of the stress you may feel. The most important things to remember when talking with your child about adoption is honesty and respect for their adoption history. By showing your child the importance of their heritage, birth story, and adoption story you are showing them they are important to you.

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Making the Decision to Find an Adoptive Family for Your Unborn Child

By Anita F. Stevens, Executive Director of Family Connections Inc.

Making a decision to find an adoptive family for your unborn child is probably one of the most important and difficult decisions you will ever make. For most families an unplanned pregnancy creates a crisis or conflict in your life. You may not be ready to parent a child because you are young and have not yet finished your education or you may be a parent to other children and feel that you do not have the capacity to parent one more child. Perhaps you want to give your child a more stable childhood than you had or provide your child with a different kind of life. Whatever your personal reasons, making this decision is always difficult.

Letting an experienced adoption agency such as Family Connections, Inc. help and support you as you educate yourself and think through your decision can help relieve some of the anxiety that comes with making such a hard decision. If you choose to make an adoption plan for your unborn child, an agency will have adoptive families who are waiting to adopt. This means that the families have been investigated to make sure they are good people. Most are unable to become parents without someone like you making a decision to find adoptive parents for their unborn child. Family Connections knows their waiting adoptive families very well. The agency has personally investigated each family, counseled them, and educated them regarding adoption. As a birth parent, you can ask all the questions you want to ask about the agency philosophy on adoption and about the prospective adoptive families that are waiting to match with a birth family. Knowing the agency philosophy can help you choose the right agency for you. Meeting with prospective adoptive parents can help you choose the best family for your child.

Asking about the agency philosophy can tell you a lot about the prospective adoptive parents. For example if you are interested in an open adoption and the agency is very supportive of open adoption then most likely the prospective adoptive parents will have signed up with this agency because they too are interested in an open adoption. If you are not sure about an open adoption you can still work with an agency that offers openness because openness means the choices are yours. An adoptive parent may want an open adoption but they will still be interested in a confidential or closed adoption if you choose this option. Choosing an agency that only offers confidential adoptions limits your choices.

If you are interested in choosing the family for your child, is this option available from the agency you are interviewing? Talking to several agencies to see if you like the staff and the policies and philosophy of the agency can help you learn about all your options. Agencies can offer different options and still be compliant with New York State Laws and regulations. Adoption laws in other states are different than New York State laws but if you wish to place your child in another state, Family Connections can help you to do that too.

Ask about an agency's core philosophy. For example, Family Connections believes that every person has the right to self determine. This means that we educate you regarding adoption, the state regulations, your options and choices and we believe that you, the birth parent, is the person who chooses

your adoption plan. Before you make any decisions, you should also have the opportunity to meet with an attorney who will educate you and explain the important legal matters in all adoptions. All of the cost of the legal services will be paid for by the agency even if you change your mind about adoption. This is New York State law.

Working with an agency means that you don't have to tell a prospective adoptive parent that you have chosen another family or have decided to parent your child. The agency can tell the family in a supportive manner and will have prepared the family for this possibility. If you feel uncomfortable asking the family questions, the agency can ask the family for you. They will probably already know the answer. The agency can help you work out the post adoption contact agreement with the prospective adoptive parents by providing you with options, suggestions, and examples of other agreements. Whatever agreement you and the prospective adoptive parents work out will be personal to you and them and reflect your wishes and values. Any agreement you make with the adoptive parents is placed into the adoption paperwork and becomes enforceable by the New York State court system. Since the agreements became a part of the legal process in a New York State adoption, there is no record of a birth parent having to ask the court to enforce the agreement. Families are happy to keep their agreement because they discussed it with you and by this time you are their hero.



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Recently a birth father paid me a visit. He had placed his child in an adoptive home several years ago. He told me that it was the hardest decision he had made but it was the best decision he had made. He was showing me pictures of a recent meeting with his birth child and the adoptive family. He said to me that he did not believe that the adoptive parents would follow through with their agreement when he signed it but now he sees that they more than followed through with the agreement. He said that they have given him more access to hear about and see his birth child than he ever believed to be possible. He wanted to thank me for telling him the truth. From my perspective as a staff member of the agency, this is the typical response of our adoptive parents. They are generally very excited to share about the child with the child's birth family and look forward to any agreed upon visits. Agencies have to monitor the agreement and if a birth parent did fail to keep their agreement the agency is obligated to join you in asking the court to enforce it.

Working with an agency means that you will not have to ask for services, the agency will ask how they can help you. Financial assistance can sometimes be difficult to ask for however New York State has laws and regulations that allow for financial assistance. The agency can also help you to connect to public services you may need after you have made an adoption plan for your child so that you can care for yourself financially and pursue your goals.

You can choose to work with an attorney and have what is referred to as a private adoption process or you can choose an agency adoption for yourself and for your child. In a private adoption all services will be provided by an attorney. In an agency adoption your services will be provided and you will be supported by experienced social workers and an adoption attorney.

Deborah Steincolor **Attorney at Law**



Your adoption experience is shaped by emotions and laws. As an attorney, with my masters in social work, I provide individualized and compassionate services to prospective adoptive parents through

all steps of adoption, birth parents planning adoptions, adoptive parents finalizing agency adoptions, re-adoptions, second parent, and stepparent adoptions. I am an active member of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys.

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Family Connections Becomes a Primary Provider for Pakistan

Family Connections Inc., is pleased to announce that they are providing Primary Provider services to prospective adoptive parents who hope to adopt from the country of Pakistan. The agency became involved with this activity in order to provide Primary Provider services to current home study clients who were in the process of adopting from Pakistan when the Universal Accreditation Act went into effect. The agency researched the specifics of the Pakistan adoption process that included conversations with the Counsel on Accreditation, the Department of State, (link to state info on adoption) other agencies providing primary provider services, and immigration attorneys. Through this research, Family Connections developed a process compliant with our Hague Accreditation standards to provide Primary Provider services for our clients

The agency also met Grace Kennedy, an immigration attorney who is very experienced with the laws of Pakistan adoptions and with US immigration law. The agency partners with Ms. Kennedy who provides the agency and our clients with legal advice regarding their specific adoption cases. Ms. Kennedy also interacts with the Pakistan attorneys who represent families as they petition the courts in Pakistan for guardianship of the children the families wish to adopt.

What began as short term service to our current clients grew into the agency being able to offer other families across the United States our Primary Provider services for Pakistan adoptions. For more information regarding Pakistan adoptions, please call 607-756-6574 and ask for Anita.

Federal Tax Credit 2015

For adoptions finalized in 2015, there is a federal adoption tax credit of up to \$13,400 per child. The 2015 adoption tax credit is NOT a refundable credit, which means taxpayers can only get the credit refunded if they have federal income tax liability, meaning they paid federal income tax in 2015. Depending upon your annual federal tax liability, you can claim the tax credit for one or more years until you reach the limit of \$13,400. If you paid less than \$13,400 in federal income taxes in 2015, you will claim the adoption credit in 2015 and in subsequent tax years until your claims total \$13,400. This credit is paid for each adopted child, thus if you adopt two or more children, it may take a few years to redeem your tax credit.

To be eligible for the for the tax credit the adoptive parents must:

- Have adopted an international or domestic child other than a stepchild or relative child - a child must be either under 18 years old or be physically or mentally unable to take of him/herself.
- Be within the income limits - how much of a credit parents can claim is effected by income. In 2015, families with a modified adjusted gross income below \$201,010 can claim full credit. Those families with incomes above \$241,010 cannot claim the credit. Those families with incomes from \$201,010 to \$241,101 can claim partial credit.

CONSIDERING ADOPTION?

Call Family Connections for education, free legal advice, support for whatever decision you make, professional counseling and an advocate to take you through the process so that your choices and decisions about your baby are protected.



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