



TIPS FOR MEETING WITH BIRTHPARENTS

You have been selected by a birthparent that read your *Dear Birthparent Letter* after reviewing other letters from prospective adoptive parents. You selected this birthparent after reviewing their *Social and Medical History* form. Now that you have selected each other you have the opportunity to meet face to face. This meeting most often will lessen the fears and myths that birthparents and prospective adoptive parents may have about one another. This meeting generally will reaffirm everyone's decision to select each other in the adoption plan.

THE FOLLOWING "POINTERS" MAY BE HELPFUL TO YOU GOING INTO THE MEETING:

- ☞ Dress casually (The birthmother is usually in maternity clothes and may not be feeling very fashionable.)
- ☞ Bring a picture album to use as an "icebreaker" to get the conversation rolling (i.e. including holiday and vacation pictures).
- ☞ Bring a camera (not one that produces pictures on the spot), be discreet and make sure the birthparents feel comfortable with you before asking to take a picture.
- ☞ Remember the birthparents are just as nervous and fearful of rejection as you are.... They want you to like them too!
- ☞ Do not exchange any money or gifts. It is fine to pick up the bill for a modest dinner.
- ☞ Think about the conversation ahead of time and plan what you want to ask. In particular, what questions do you think your child may someday ask about his or her birth family?
- ☞ Consider asking the birthparents for pictures of themselves and their extended family.
- ☞ Try not to second-guess the birthparents....be yourself!!
- ☞ Consider asking the birthparents (and extended birthparents family members) to write a letter explaining to the child that the decision to place was not a rejection of the child but rather a decision made in love after much soul-searching and thought.
- ☞ Resist the urge to make promises you may not keep. If something comes up that you have not discussed with your spouse, tell the birthparent that you have not thought of that before and need to discuss it together and then get back to them.
- ☞ Ask for more information about social and medical history and birth family background.

- ☞ Will you be naming the child together? Will you use the name the birthparents pick as a middle name?
- ☞ What kind of hospital experience is preferred by the birthparents? Would the birthparents like you to come to visit the baby in the hospital? Will you be notified when she goes into labor? Do you want the birthmother to have the baby circumcised? (She must request this. The hospital will not honor a request by you or the agency). Does birthmother want Adoption Circle at doctor's visits? How much time will you spend at the hospital?
- ☞ Remember that ultimately your social worker will need to okay any arrangements with the hospital. Each hospital has a different policy and different levels of receptiveness to adoption. Remember to check with your social worker – she will have to make the arrangements with the hospital.
- ☞ What level of openness is preferred? Pictures and letters for how long? Directly or through the agency? Birthparents send pictures and letters also? (You may want to continue receiving pictures and letters over time especially when there are siblings involved).
- ☞ Ongoing contact/meeting after placement (i.e. yearly picnics at a park or other “neutral” place or meeting again before the baby is born.) Exchange of identifying information (names, addresses) and ongoing relationship? One-way identifying information (where you have direct access to birthparents and they may contact you through the agency).
- ☞ More meetings with family, siblings? Meeting with birthfather? Information about him and his family, getting pictures and letters from him, his feelings about adoption (this is important to share with your child).

WHAT YOU CAN LEARN.....

- ☞ Get a “feel” for the birthparent’s personalities
- ☞ See what they physically look like
- ☞ Establish rapport and trust on both sides
- ☞ Assess whether the birthparents have furnished reliable information

AFTER THE MEETING.....

- ☞ It is not uncommon for the birthparents to decide to parent after meeting with prospective adoptive parents. This happens because the decision becomes more “real”. It does not mean they did not like you.
- ☞ Refer any questions to your homestudy social worker. An agency social worker will call within a week or so with feedback from the birthparents (it is not always possible to reach the birthparents immediately).