

# HOW TO CHOOSE AN ADOPTION/FOSTER CARE AGENCY

- ◆ The Family Independence Agency of Michigan will allow you to conduct a **STATEWIDE SEARCH OF LICENSED INDEPENDENT CHILD WELFARE FACILITIES**. There you can access the state's licensing reports and investigation reports online, to gain some insight into different Michigan agencies and how well they function. You can also ensure that an adoption agency is appropriately licensed in the state of Michigan. Access this function at [www.cis.state.mi.us/brs\\_cwl/sr\\_cwl.asp](http://www.cis.state.mi.us/brs_cwl/sr_cwl.asp).
- ◆ Contact the **STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE** to see if any legal action is pending against the agency. **Michigan:** Mike Cox (R) (517) 373-1110 P.O.Box 30212, 525 W. Ottawa St., Lansing, MI 48909-0212; <http://www.ag.state.mi.us>. Go to [www.naag.org/ag/full\\_ag\\_table.php](http://www.naag.org/ag/full_ag_table.php) for a full listing by state or look in the government section of your phone book. The Attorney General's Office is located in the state capital.
- ◆ Contact the **BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU** to check for a reliability report on the agency.

BBB of Western Michigan  
[www.grandrapids.bbb.org](http://www.grandrapids.bbb.org)  
**Email:** [bbbinfo@iserv.net](mailto:bbbinfo@iserv.net)  
**Phone:** (616) 774-8236  
**Fax:** (616) 774-2014  
40 Pearl, NW, Ste. 354  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

To search for other area BBB's, go to [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org) or call local information.

From the BBB website:

Although the majority of adoption agencies, attorneys or others involved in the adoption process are honest and helpful, there are a few which have questionable practices. Some agencies or attorneys, for example, may charge exorbitant fees or ask for a retainer in full when the person applies, without provisions for refunds of any kind.

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) suggests that you carefully review the standard procedures of any agency you plan to use. Contact the BBB for reliability report on the agency. You can also contact your State Adoption Specialist, or an individual at your state Social Services headquarters to see if there are any complaints or investigations about the agency. Consider calling adoptive parent groups in your area and ask them if any members have had experience with the agency.

When you have located an agency or attorney and you are thinking about applying to adopt, you should ask the following questions: Does the organization concentrate on

placing infants or older children? What type of adoptive parents does the agency seek? How long will it take from applying to the agency to the start of the home study? (The home study is an information gathering process to make sure the people hoping to adopt are ready for parenthood and to help them understand how to become good parents). Find out how many children the agency has placed in the last year. What preparation classes, seminars or readings does the agency require of adoptive parents? What supervision will occur after the child is placed with your family but before finalization of the adoption? (Most adoptions are finalized by the court about six months after the child is placed for domestic adoptions). Also, ask what assistance the agency can provide after the adoption. Get names of people who have adopted children through the agency. Names may be available from the agency or from parent groups. Call the adoptive parents and ask them if it's convenient to discuss their agency experience with you. Finally, you'll want to secure expert advice before signing any contract.

- ◆ Ask the agencies you are interested in for at least three **REFERENCES** for their agency (preferably some who have completed adoptions of the same type you are pursuing) that completed their adoptions at least 3 years ago. Ask them about the entire process, including post-placement follow-up and support. You may want to talk to someone that has been through a similar process more recently as well, as things may change over time. Have a list of questions ready when you call the references. \*\*Make sure that references are not board members or employees of the agency.
- ◆ For international adoption agencies, you will want to research government requirements of the country you are pursuing adoption from. Many governments require licensing or accreditation of U.S. adoption agencies, although some agencies still work in countries where they are not approved by the government. If there is a governmental requirement and you decide to work with an unlicensed/unaccredited agency, you may be taking on unnecessary risks.

## *Families of Promise*

*Orphan and Adoption Resource and Support Ministry*

*A Ministry of Kentwood Community Church*

[www.familiesofpromise.org](http://www.familiesofpromise.org)