

## ***Advice for Adoptive Parents from Birth Parents After Birth***

This document was created to aid adoptive parents with Semi-Open and Open Adoption Post Placement Contact. As each adoption is different and unique, the suggestions here are intended to give suggestions only. Each family can choose what is right for them and their birth parent. Some of these ideas might also be in your open adoption agreements if you have one. If not, please read these over as some of these suggestions were by actual birth parents.

- Phone calls after birth. If you have exchanged phone numbers after birth, then please call the birth parents a few times within the first year. It is always suggested that you call after you get home so that the birth parents can know that their child is safe in their new home. We also suggest calling at two, four and six months just to say Hi. Do not call unless you have made arrangements with your birth parent(s) through the agency or their case worker as you do not want to invade on their privacy. If you have given your phone number to the birth parents and they call you, please return the call. Most birth parents do not wish to invade on your privacy either but wish to know how the child is doing. Please reassure them that the child is loved and is doing well.
- Photo Album: Most adoptive parents always want to know what they can give the birth parents as a token of their appreciation at the hospital. We suggest a family photo album that they can place the child's pictures in after the birth of the child. You can also give the birth parents pictures of yourself, your extended family and your community for her album. This allows the birth parents to look at these photos at their leisure and process through the adoption.
- Adoption Journal: This inexpensive item can be given as a gift to your birth parent so they might write feelings and their experiences throughout the adoption journey. This is a wonderful gift even at the beginning of your relationship.
- Send pictures you took at the hospital (some with you, baby and birth parents). If you can get these pictures to her before you leave town through the case worker or agency, that is ideal. If you have given her a photo album, she can place these first pictures in the album. Please just make two sets of prints of all your photos and send to the office or directly to the birth parents.
- 8 X 10 and/or wallet of professional 1<sup>st</sup> photo from hospital. If this is available and you contacted the hospital about these photos, it is really nice to send this along to the birth parents. You can do so digitally or with hard copies.
- When sending pictures, includes pictures of child with other children or relatives. This shows the birth parents that the child is loved and by your extended family and community as well as yourselves. Please make sure that the child is smiling if possible. Adoptive parents tend to fear that the birth parents will want to take the child back if the child is smiling and happy in the pictures. However, this is not

- the case. The birth parents desire that the child is happy and healthy in their new home.
- Cards/letters sharing the child's progress (holding head up, crawling, walking). Many birth parents wish to make sure that a child's milestones are met. These updates should tell about what the child has been doing and what progress they have made.
  - Share funny habits the child is developing. Birth parents might have done the same thing, and it is very touching to know that parts of them are present in their children even though they are not raising them. Do you see our eyes, nose in the child? Let them know. There is something very comforting about knowing this information.
  - Cassette type/DVD of child leaning to crawl, walk, or at a family gathering. These items can now be placed digitally on a web page or emailed to the agency/birth parents.
  - A lock of hair after child's first hair cut. Send this directly to the agency and they will forward if you do not have direct contact with your birth parents.
  - Handprints/footprints if they are made. Sometimes these are in ink and sometimes can be done in plaster. If you have the time, please send these to the birth parents through the agency or directly. They are a great keepsake.
  - Any artwork the child may do even at young age. As parents, you will find that your child does countless numbers of art work as he/she grows. Set aside one or two of these pieces each year to send to the birth parents.
  - Pictures of that first birthday cake with the child's face. (maybe some cake on that face too!).
  - Necklace with picture in it or bracelet with child's initials in it (just an inexpensive keepsake). This is another inexpensive gift that adoptive parents might give the birth parents. They will treasure this item.
  - A small scrapbook at the end of the year (if you're in to that).
  - As child grows, send copies of school pictures and let us know child is good at counting, reading, etc.
  - Candle that we can burn and always remember the strong love & guidance that our child is receiving. This is a great hospital gift for birth parents.
  - Scan pictures into e-mail and send updates digitally.
  - Create a website just for your child that you can update online. Give the birth parents the web address and pass code so that they can view these pictures as much as they wish. This also is a great way to update pictures for family and friends.
  - Some birthmothers enjoy emailing back and forth to adoptive parents for their updates. The free email address on the web gives each party complete access without the hassle of the US mail service/costs and expenses. This form of communication is becoming very popular.
  - Pictures of special occasions/holidays/birthdays
  - Picture of baby on a bookmark.
  - Remember us on Mother's and/or Father's Day (it means a lot to us to be recognized for having brought a beautiful life into the world!)
  - Key chains, magnets, coffee mugs with baby's picture on them.

- MySpace and Facebook: This form of communication is also becoming very popular. Adoptive parents as well as birth parents usually have a page and communicate effectively through these popular sites. Please remember that if you have one of these pages, that all the information you provide is available to everyone with a Myspace/Facebook page for viewing. This includes birth parents.

Please know that updates are not about “gifts” but for better way to communicate and have a relationship with your birth parents. All types of updates are very heart warming & appreciated by birth parents. The first few are critical in helping birth parents to feel peace that their baby is happy and surrounded by love. Please send agreed upon items in a timely manner as birth parents often check their mailbox multiple times per day in anticipation!!! In the end, birth parents love anything given to them and we will appreciate being remembered. Everyone in the process should have the best interest of the child in mind when sending letters, updates and communications.

## ***Updates to Birth Parents- Definitions***

Prepared by Adoption Choices

- ✓ ***What exactly is an update?*** An update is general information put together by you that is sent to the birth parent. An update usually consists of the general information of the child, such as overall health, weight, height and general development (i.e. crawling, talking, walking, etc.) Updates can include any fun stories or activities the family has done. There is no exact format to provide an update. They can include anything you feel comfortable including.
- ✓ ***Why provide updates?*** The updates a birth parent receives allows them to feel connected to the child. It reassures that child is safe, happy and well adjusted. They make a birth parent feel respected, special, and important to the family. Updates are very significant to a birth parent.
- ✓ ***When do we provide updates?*** The recommended times for sending the updates are immediately (1-2 weeks after placement), 3 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 18 months and once a year until the child is 5. After 5, the update schedule can be reevaluated by both you and the birth parent. However, a birth parent may request more or fewer updates than this, or may choose not to receive updates. When agreeing upon a schedule for the updates, it is important to remember that they must be on time. A birth parent who requests updates is depending on you to send them on time. You are showing that they can trust you by sending them on time.
- ✓ ***Where are the updates sent?*** You would send the update you have made to your attorney. They would forward the update to your child's birth parent. There would be no confidential information. Such as your address, released, unless you personally choose to release it.
- ✓ ***How long do we send the updates?*** You should send the updates for the agreed time between you and the birth parent.
- ✓ ***What are some ideas for updates?*** There are many ways to create a fun and thoughtful update for everyone. Some ideas include, pictures of the child playing and interacting with family, creating DVD/video of the child, cards, letters, any items that may have special meaning. Also you can include drawing from the child, or handprints they have made. Have fun with it!