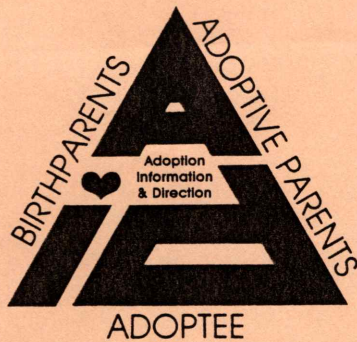




Adoption Information and Direction, Inc.

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM US?

We're glad you have expressed interest in Adoption Information and Direction, Inc., whether by attending your first meeting or by contacting us for information. This handout, along with our group's brochure and list of chapters, is designed to tell you about what you can expect to get from our group, what you should not expect us to do for you, and to tell you what our group expects from you. While people come to us for many reasons, we hope that we will be able to meet your needs, and that reading this will help your expectations of us to be more realistic.

WHAT ADOPTION INFORMATION AND DIRECTION CAN DO FOR YOU:

There are many things that only a group of people with similar life experiences has to offer.

We can help you feel less alone in dealing with your problems.

We can provide a wealth of information from our members about where to turn for help with an adoption-related problem:

- We can recommend reading material;

- We can help you decide whether searching is right for you, and whether now is the right time to do it;

- We can provide information on dealing with adoption agencies and with the Wisconsin Adoption Search program;

- We can share information on dealing with courts, county clerks, and other sources of records as you conduct your search;

- We can help you contact support groups such as ours in other states if necessary;

- We may be able to suggest attorneys or therapists that group members have found to be helpful and knowledgeable about adoption issues.

We can brainstorm with you and members of the group to come up with a personalized plan of actions for you to take, based on plans which have worked for other group members.

We can give you courage and support to take the difficult steps that may be necessary to accomplish your goals.

We can help you open up and express your feelings (which may include very fearful, hurt, or angry ones) about your part in the adoption process. We strive to be a "safe" audience, who understands how you feel, and who admits to having had the same feelings, though perhaps at different times. Since Adoption Information and Direction, Inc. encourages membership from all sides of the adoption triad, we can offer our varied points of view to help you understand your own feelings from other perspectives.

We can help give you a feeling of empowerment that comes from taking constructive action on a problem, rather than denying it, or sitting around and feeling helpless about your situation.

We can show you that there are people who are willing to share their knowledge, experiences, and feelings about adoption search issues, and who care about helping one another.

We can work together to try to bring about changes leading to increased openness in adoption, so that, in the future, problems such as ours need not exist, or at least will have easier solutions.

We hope that we do more at our meetings than just sit around and talk about our problems, but even if that seems to be all that is going on, look closely at what is happening. We hope you'll see all of the things we've mentioned: an arm around a shoulder; a member of the triad seeing other members and not feeling so different; a member grateful for a listening ear. Whatever the focus of the meeting, mutual support can and does take place. Take time to really get to know the people you meet, to share your concerns, and to offer your experience to others. The results may be surprising!

WHAT ADOPTION INFORMATION AND DIRECTION CAN NOT DO FOR YOU:

We can not provide quick or easy solutions to your problems. Often people turn to a support group with the expectation that their problem will be solved simply and without pain by just attending a few meetings. Some people feel that the only reason to turn to others for help is to solve an immediate problem, and to do it quickly, even when their awareness of the problem may have been building up for months or years. Many problems do not have a simple solution while others can't be solved at all. Some searchers run into dead ends and may *never* be able to find the answers they seek. Sometimes the realization of this fact, and help with the adjustment to it, are the only things our group *can* provide.

We can not *do your search for you* as a part of your membership fee. You need to be clear *in advance* about what the cost will be for any search assistance which may be provided for you outside of the normal group meeting time.

WHAT ADOPTION INFORMATION AND DIRECTION EXPECTS FROM YOU:

As a volunteer search and support group we have few expectations of our members, but the following three are basic to making our group function.

Respect for everyone at meetings. What "works" for some people may not "work" for you, but no-one has the right to tell anyone else how that person should or should not feel. We can only share our true feelings in an atmosphere of mutual respect and acceptance. You need not agree with everything you hear, but you do need to accept the reality of others' feelings and life experiences.

Attendance at meetings. *This is especially important after your immediate needs have been met.* As you will soon find out, it is encouraging to those attending their first few meetings to hear from people who have more experience in the process. Our group may well be the only place where these issues are addressed. To attend only until you have obtained what *you* need defeats the purpose of a mutual support group, and is rather selfish.

Payment of your dues. The fact that we are a "volunteer" group means that no-one gets paid for the time, driving and telephone costs, or most other expenses involved in conducting local or state group business. The group still must pay for postage, post office boxes, most duplicating, and dues to other state and national organizations of which we are a part. Our dues are among the lowest of any of the many state search and support organizations who are members of the American Adoption Congress. We sincerely hope that you will find your experiences with us to be worth the cost of your membership.

Welcome to Adoption Information and Direction!

SEARCH SUGGESTIONS

Here are some suggestions to get you started in your search:

1. You will need to keep a complete notebook on everything you do in your search (this eliminates duplication and helps organize your search material for a search assistant to look through at a glance).
 - a. Either photocopy or log all letters of inquiry you send out.
 1. Record when sent, when reply received, what was requested, to whom you wrote, what answer given, amount of money sent.
 2. Have all letters notarized.
 3. Send money orders rather than personal checks whenever possible (many places delay by waiting for the check to clear before answering queries) **-DO NOT SEND CASH!**
 - b. Log all phone calls - date, time, to whom you spoke, questions asked, response.
 - c. Write down everything you have ever been told or overheard regarding the adoption. Never overlook family friends or relatives. Do not ignore a source of information because you doubt that it is important. You never know what little clue may break your search.
 - d. Keep a list of things to do:
 1. Suggestions and ideas by you, a search assistant, friends or relatives
 2. Phone calls - the number, who to ask for, what to say, what not to say
 3. Letters - name, address, what to ask for, how to word it, how much money
 4. Places to visit - address, who to ask for, description of what you need
2. Photocopy all documents and keep originals in a safe place. Remember to bring photocopies of everything to meetings - **NOT ORIGINALS**.
3. If you don't have a copy of your amended birth certificate - get one. Throughout your search you will refer to it. Request a complete certificate - they apparently have at least 3 versions in Wisconsin at this time.
4. If you don't know the county in which you were adopted, then contact the state and ask for a copy of your record. In California, a copy of the adoption decree can be obtained from Sacramento.
5. Contact the agency that handled your adoption and ask background information. They will respond with "non-identifying" information. This means no names or addresses. Ask any questions you want but try not to share what you have with them (the less they think you know the more they are likely to give you). Try to build a working relationship with the social worker - be friendly.
6. If it was a private adoption, contact the lawyer for any information in his files. If possible, have your adoptive parents help you with this.
7. If you have the original name you were given, try writing to the county recorder where you were born and ask for your original birth certificate. Sometimes people get lucky and spring the document by not saying they are adopted.
8. The information from the agency and the decree can be a clue to the phone books of which state to start searching for your original family name.
9. In most states there exists a "birth summary" which lists all the births in the country by the year. You can find all the names of the people born on the day you are looking for. Note the registration number, they never change. If yours is the same number as the one in the records, then you have found the original name given. The California birth summary was closed on orders from Sacramento in May 1978.

10. Phone books: telephone companies and public libraries keep old copies. You can write or call the reference department of the library, asking for help in looking up names in the old phone books. If you don't live close to where you are searching, it's better to request this by mail. Telephone companies also have directories with listings by address as well as by names. There could be difficulty in locating those.
11. There are city directories in many cities which contain information about residents, names, children, occupation, and such. They also may list by a street breakdown. These are often found at libraries and historical societies. (In Wisconsin, the State Historical Society in Madison has these for cities all over the country going back to the first publications).
12. In California and most states, you may secure the information on anyone's driver's license by writing to: Department of Motor Vehicles. You may need the person's date of birth and middle initial. Do not take a negative approach. Also, vehicle registration is different for most states and requested separately.

The following will pertain to birthparents:

1. The availability of the adoption decree varies; however, even a denial may contain an important number.
2. The adoption agency should be updated and sent your "waiver" to open the file. Also, request the "court of jurisdiction" where the adoption took place so that you may petition that court.
3. If you didn't receive a copy of the relinquishment papers that you signed, you may demand a copy now.
4. Send for a copy of the original birth certificate but don't mention adoption.

Other sources of information:

Hospital and doctor records: medical records of mother and/or child

Juvenile court: Adoption decree and relinquishment papers

Bureau of Vital Statistics: birth and death certificates

Library: city directories; newspaper microfilm, phone books

Tax Assessor: names and dates of property owners

County Register of Deeds: birth, death, marriage. Clerk of Courts: divorce

University archives: student information

Social Security: Will forward a letter but must be able to read the letter. Need as much information as possible

Want ads: run an ad in the personal or missing persons columns (many of these are in the Genealogical Helper and Reunions, the magazine)

Try every source, always get copies of everything

Though typed April 1991, I don't know when these notes from ALMA were organized.