

OPEN ADOPTION WORKSHEET

OPEN, SEMI-OPEN, AND CLOSED ADOPTION

Different agencies or organizations may have varying interpretations of the following terms. The definitions here are meant only to provide a general overview and may not match completely how a particular agency uses a specific term.

An **OPEN ADOPTION** is one in which last names, addresses, and telephone numbers typically are exchanged and the birth parent/s, the adoptive family, and, in some cases, the child may visit on a regular basis. In a fully open adoption, the birth parent/s and the adoptive family know each other and have ongoing communication about the child.

In a **SEMI-OPEN ADOPTION**, communication is more limited. Last names, addresses, and telephone numbers usually are not exchanged, sharing of photos or other information is less frequent, and all communication takes place through a third party, usually the adoption agency.

In a **CLOSED ADOPTION**, no identifying information about the birth family or the adoptive family is shared, and the families do not communicate. The adoptive family usually receives non-identifying background information about the child and the birth family before placement. After adoption, the records are sealed and typically are not available to the adopted child.

IDENTIFIED ADOPTION

In this type of adoption, the birth mother has identified the family whom she wishes to adopt her child.

INDEPENDENT ADOPTIONS

These adoptions are arranged through an intermediary, such as a lawyer or a physician, rather than through a licensed adoption agency. The intermediary may find the birth mother, who plans to place her child for adoption, or may help the birth mother locate a family interested in adopting her child.

MBCH CHILDREN AND FAMILY MINISTRIES PROCEDURE

Open adoption is a child-centered process. MBCH Children & Family Ministries encourages open adoptions when the situation is appropriate. Not every situation is conducive to open adoption.

Obviously, in cases of severe abuse and/or neglect by the biological parents, it may not be in the best interest of children to have contact with their biological parents. In situations where contact would not be detrimental, open adoption is a way for the children to have knowledge of their biological family.

It can be a healing process for children to learn the reasons their biological parents were unable to parent them and the choice of the parents to place them with a loving, adoptive family. Open adoption also becomes a way to stay abreast of the biological family's medical history.

For private infant adoptions coordinated through MBCH Children & Family Ministries, the practice is for the birth mother and/or father to choose the family for their child. Adoptive family profiles are presented to the birth parents. They will choose two or three families and receive more information about them. The life books for these families are then shared with the birth parents.

The birth parents may choose to meet the adoptive families. The meeting usually takes place at a restaurant with the social worker present; only first names are shared and no other identifying information, such as town name, last names, etc. are given.

If the birth parents have decided to have an open adoption they have the choice of meeting with the adoptive parents if they wish to decide on the degree of openness. They can also choose to arrange the amount of openness through an intermediary.

It is important that the adoptive parents are as honest about the extent of openness they are comfortable with as the plan is based on the good faith of the adoptive parents. Legally, there is no binding contract and the decisions of contact rest solely on the adoptive parents after the finalization of the adoption. MBCH Children and Family Ministries expect its adoptive parents to honor the commitments they make with the birth parents.

The following worksheet is designed to help you think through thoughts and feelings concerning open adoption:

QUESTIONS:

1. What is your understanding of the meaning of open adoption?

2. Who do you envision as the people involved in an open adoption?

3. How do you think an open adoption would be of benefit to the birth parents?

4. How do you think an open adoption would be of benefit to the adoptive parents?

5. How do you think an open adoption would be of benefit to the child?

6. What do you see as the negatives of open adoption?

7. How do you think the birth parent and adoptive parent could minimize those negatives?