

Questions to ask an adoption agency

Deciding on an adoption agency can be an organizational challenge. Copy this sheet (or print it out at www.adoptivefamilies.com/planner) and then fill one out for each agency you consider. Don't forget that there is much more information about each agency listed in this guide on the *Adoptive Families* Web site: www.adoptivefamilies.com/adoption_agencies.

Adoption Agency Name _____

Placement

- How many children did you place last year?
- How many children from each of the programs in which I am interested?
- How long have you been placing children from each program?
- (For singles) How many children did you place with a single parent? What types of children were placed with single parents?

Timing

- How soon after I apply will my homestudy begin? How long will it take? When will I know if I have been approved?
- If I am not approved, can I find out why? Is there an appeal process?
- How long will it take from homestudy or dossier approval to the referral of a child? How much time do I have to decide on a referral? What happens if I don't accept the referral?

Costs

- What is the total cost of adopting through each program? Can I get a written breakdown of fees and a payments schedule?
- Does the fee cover the homestudy, all post-placement visits, fees to the placing agency (international or in-country), international processing, transportation, and miscellaneous fees (visa, dossier preparation, notarization, medical exams, document translation, exit tax)? What does it not cover?
- Do you have an annual report that demonstrates fiscal accountability? How does the agency spend leftover funds? What percentage of the funds is spent on administration?

Agency Cost Structure:

Application fee: _____

Homestudy (only) fee: _____

Program fee: _____

Timing of Payments: _____

Post-placement fees: _____

Refund policy: _____

International Programs

- Is intercountry adoption stable in my country of choice? Do you have programs in other countries I could switch to if regulations change or if a moratorium is declared?
- Are the international agencies you work with licensed in their own countries? How long have you worked with them?
- What information do we receive about a referral before we travel? How thorough and accurate is the medical information?
- What are the travel requirements? Do you help with travel arrangements?
- Do you have bilingual representatives respected by the authorities in each foreign country to obtain or assist with the referral of a child? Will they be there to assist me when I arrive? What is their experience and tenure with the agency? Do they work exclusively for you and exclusively in adoption?
- Do you financially support the orphanages from which you place children? How often do your representatives visit these orphanages?

Other Pertinent Questions

- Do you give clients a copy of their rights with the application form? Do you provide a contract that spells out my responsibilities toward the adoption as well as what you are responsible for?
- Is there a written policy of quality assurance that will address my concerns during the process?
- What are the post-placement requirements, and what support services do you offer before, during, and after placement?
- What happens if I find I can't parent the child I adopted?

Adapted from "Shopping for an Adoption Agency," Adoption Information Service, Seattle, Washington.

Notes:
