

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR FAMILIES ADOPTING INTERNATIONALLY

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Q. What are the main things I should know and learn prior to adopting?

- A. 1. Adoption is a lifelong process
2. Parents must develop appropriate expectations for their adopted child
3. Parents must understand the effects of institutionalization
4. Parents should anticipate their adopted child's special needs
5. Parents should develop a sensitivity and respect for their child's culture
6. Parents should be prepared to travel by themselves or with a child

Q. What are some things that are often overlooked prior to adoption?

- A. 1. Identifying a primary care practitioner who is familiar with international adoption
2. Establishing medical insurance for the adopted child
3. Learning what issues an adopted child may have and learning to anticipate their needs, including finding support services in the event that the child exhibits such special needs

Q. What do most parents worry about when they are planning on adopting?

- A. 1. Health problems
2. Developmental problems
3. Behavioral and emotional problems

Q. What types of health problems might a parent want to anticipate and be prepared for?

- A. 1. Infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, intestinal problems, skin infections, and hepatitis
2. Undetected metabolic or genetic disorders such as fetal alcohol syndrome
3. Malnutrition due to lack of a well-balanced diet or failure to take in enough calories

Q. How do I handle feeding my child when we are in-country and back in the US?

- A. 1. Parents should slowly introduce new foods (children may reject new food because of its difference in texture and consistency). Slowly introducing any new food will help a child get used to different textures and help with absorption and allergy issues.
2. Parents should allow children to eat as much as they want at feeding times, but also to feed the child more slowly. Children will generally eat fast and continue to eat for as long as you let them, generally because they are afraid that there will not be more food later or that another child is going to come steal the food.

Q. What types of evaluation and screening should a parent have with their child upon return to the US?

A. 1. Children should have a physical examination, behavioral and developmental assessment, and laboratory evaluation. Developmental assessments should probably be completed on your child at 3 mos., 6 mos., and 12 months post adoption.

Q. Are the immunization records that parents receive about their adopted child reliable?

A. 1. Generally immunization records are unreliable. Children not properly immunized are at risk so parents may need to consider starting from scratch or completing blood work on their child to determine antibodies present.

Q. What are some effects of institutionalization on children?

A. 1. Effects can include psychosocial deprivation, physical and sexual abuse, inadequate medical care, environmental toxins, and malnutrition.

Q. What are some initial behavioral problems that parents should look for and be prepared for?

A. 1. Attachment disorder
2. Inability to process different textures
3. Feeding and eating disordered behaviors
4. Difficulty dealing with new parents' lack of structure and routine
5. Sleep problems (remember this could be stress, jet lag, transitioning problems, or attachment)

Q. What are some good ways to foster attachment with my child?

A. 1. Nighttime is a great time to initiate attachment with your child. If your child should wake at night parents should give them whatever interaction they need to foster attachment.
2. Parents should be very flexible upon their return to the US. The more one-on-one attention and time home with your child the better.
3. Avoid over-stimulation. Having every extended family member and lots of friends come over to hold, hug and kiss your child could be very difficult for your child.
4. Be very receptive to your child's signals of his or her needs

Q. How can I best assist my child if I sense that there is a problem with attachment?

A. 1. Parents should take a very proactive approach in this regard. Contact Early Intervention within 45 days of your return and/or complete a thorough screening to determine what delays your child may have and to get intervention as soon as possible.

BOOKS

The following are some suggestions of books when you are considering adoption and after you have decided to begin the process:

Adamec, C.A. (1996). There are Babies to Adopt: A Resources Guide for Perspective Parents. New York: Kensington Publishing Corp.

Eldridge, S. (1999). Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew. Dell Publishing

Johnston, P.I. (1992). Adopting After Infertility. Indianapolis: Perspective Press.

Kincaid, J. (1997). Adopting for Good: A Guide for People Considering Adoption. Illinois: InterVarsity Press.

Melina, L.R. (1989). Making Sense of Adoption: A Parent's Guide. NY: Harper Collins

Schaffer, J. & Lindstrom, C. (1991). How to Raise an Adopted Child: A Guide to Help Your Child Flourish from Infancy Through Adolescence. NY: Copestone Press

Verrier, N. (1997). The Primal Wound: Understanding the Adopted Child. Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc.

The following are some suggestions of books for newly formed adoptive families:

Say, A. (1997). Allison. When Allison realizes that she looks more like her favorite doll than like her parents, she comes to terms with this unwelcomed discovery through the help of a stray cat.

Burwash, L. & McMullin, C. (1998). All About Me. Written by two adoptive mothers as a tool for adoptive parents who wish to help their young children understand the meaning of being adopted.

Kob, F.M. (2000). A China Adoption Story: Mommy, Why Do We Look Different? Four year old Laura Shu-Mei wonders why she and her parents don't look the same. Her mom explains about Laura's beginnings in China and tells her the story of how she was adopted.

Kroll, V. (1994). Beginnings: How Families Come to Be. Six vignettes discuss six different ways that children join families, including by adoption.

Livingston, C. (1997). Why Was I Adopted? This is a picture book dealing with some of the most frequent questions children ask about adoption. The answers are designed to reinforce feelings of love and self-esteem.

Pellegrini, N. (1991). Families are Different. Six-year-old Nico and 10-year-old Angelica were adopted from Korea as babies. Nico becomes troubled because her two girlfriends look just like their parents. Finally Nico talks to her mom who tells her all about the many different kinds of families.

Wasson, V.P. & Coalson, G. (1977). The Chosen Baby. This book explains to young children the joy and rapture adoptive parents feel when the baby arrives. The couple in the novel adopt one baby and then decide to adopt a second one.

CLEVELAND RESOURCES:

Adoption Network Cleveland
Loftworks Building
1667 East 40th St. Suite B-1
Cleveland, OH 44103
(216) 881-7511

Adoption Network Cleveland provides information, support and programs for those considering or involved in domestic and international adoption

www.adoptionnetwork.org

Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital
University Hospitals of Cleveland
Adoption Health Service
11100 Euclid Avenue, Mail Stop 6038
Cleveland, Ohio 44106-6038
(216) 844-3224

The Adoption Health Service at Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital offers a variety of pre-adoptive services tailored to meet each family's individual needs. Whether you have no information or detailed reports, their experts can provide you with information and tools needed to make your decision. Their goal is to provide evaluation and education for infants, children and families.

http://www.rainbowbabies.org/services/centersandprograms/AdoptionHealthServices/services_preadoption.aspx

Families With Children From China - Ohio Chapters

<http://www.fwcc.org/contacts.html#anchor6>

Provides a network of support for families who've adopted in China and provides information to prospective parents.

Families for Russian and Ukrainian Adoption

www.frua.org

Families for Russian and Ukrainian Adoption (FRUA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit support network for adoptive families with children from the former Soviet Union with chapters throughout the US.

Local Chapter: Cincinnati

Contact: Susan Walters

(937) 332-1177

E-Mail: sdew@woh.rr.com

INTERNET RESOURCES

ATTACH

www.attach.org

ATTACH was founded in 1989 by leaders in the children's mental health field to address critical family and social needs related to attachment and bonding. ATTACH is an international coalition of parents, professionals and others working to increase awareness about attachment and its critical importance to human development.

COMEUNITY

www.comeunity.com

Founded in 1996, COMEUNITY provides parent-to-parent support on international adoption, special needs adoption, how to adopt, adoptive parenting, adoption health, and more. Adoption list serves and adoption forums by country.

Eastern European Adoption Coalition, Inc.

www.eadopt.net

The areas covered include explaining the adoption process, meeting governmental regulations and requirements, the negative effects of institutional care on children, the prevalent medical, emotional, and behavioral issues of children living in orphanages, potential developmental and learning disabilities, the challenges of older children, sibling and special needs adoptions, successful schooling, fostering an adopted child's self-esteem, maintaining a child's culture and heritage, and promoting exceptional and compassionate parenting skills.

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Joint Council on International Children's Services

www.jcics.org

The primary mission of JCICS is to advocate for homeless children around the world. They promote ethical practices in adoption and support efforts to improve services for children. JCICS membership includes licensed, non-profit international adoption agencies, parent groups, advocacy organizations, and individuals who have an interest in inter-country adoption.

National Adoption Information Clearinghouse

<http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/>

A comprehensive resource on all aspects of adoption, including infant, inter-country, and special needs adoption. Established in 1987, NAIC is a service of the Administration for Children Youth and Families, Department of Health and Human Services.

National Association for Multicultural Education

www.nameorg.org

NAME acts as a clearinghouse for multicultural education resource materials and educational strategies, and facilitates initiatives supportive of culturally diverse faculty, administrators, students, and parents in schools at all levels, from pre-K through universities.

Pact, An Adoption Alliance

www.pactadopt.org

Pact's goal is to create and maintain the internet's most comprehensive site addressing issues for adopted children of color, offering informative articles on related topics as well as profiles of triad members and their families, links to other internet resources, and a book reference guide with a searchable database.

Parents Network for the Post-Institutionalized Child

www.pnpic.org

A support network devoted to understanding the medical, developmental, emotional and educational needs of children adopted from hospitals, orphanages and institutions throughout the world.

International Adoption Alliance

www.i-a-a.org

A non-profit organization designed to help provide cultural resources for transracially/transculturally adopted children and their families.

Support Groups for Brazil

www.groups.yahoo.com/group/brazilianadoptionparentssupportgroup

The North American Council on Adoptable Children

www.nacac.org

NACAC offers training and publications for people who are currently, or who are considering, parenting transracially.

US Department of State

<http://www.travel.state.gov/family/adoption.html>

Provides information on international adoption, international travel, passports and visas.