

Moving to Adoption

Moving from fertility treatment to adoption involves a number of changes. Many couples will wish to think about these changes before they begin the adoption process. One of the first considerations is the change in focus for the couple. This involves a shift from focusing on having a genetic child to becoming parents and accepting a child who needs adoptive parents. To do this, a couple 'moves' from the clinic where they have had treatment to the Child, Youth and Family Service (CYFs), who administer the adoption process.

Who Can Adopt

Anybody within New Zealand can make contact with CYFs to enquire about the adoption. CYFs will guide you from there.

Important Considerations

It is strongly recommended by both the fertility clinics and CYFs, that couple finish any form of treatment before they apply to adopt. Couples need to grieve the loss of their own genetic child before they can readily bond with a child with no genetic connection to them.

When considering adopting you need to rethink a number of your expectations of yourselves as parents and for your children, and to know that some of them will not be fulfilled. You need to believe in the good in all children and that you can nurture this child.

The Losses in Moving to Adoption

Most significant is the loss of seeing yourself and your partner in the child. You will not see the physical likeness nor will you probably see the special talents and traits you relish in your partner. You may see in your child other wonderful abilities and traits to nurture and enjoy.

Open Adoption

Open adoptions are based on an agreement reached at the time of placing a child with adoptive parents that there will be some form of continuing contact between the birth parents and the adoptive parents and child. The nature of this contact varies between people and also over time within families. The agreement is voluntary and needs to be flexible.

The Process of Adoption

When a couple makes contact with CYFs they initially meet a case worker from the

Adoption Services unit to discuss adoption in general. Following this they attend a series of seminars to give them an understanding of adoption within New Zealand and Internationally the open adoption system.

Couples are required to create a profile about themselves to be made available to birth parents to help selection. Home visits from social workers focus on the many issues surrounding adoption.

When the requirements are completed a couple's profile is put into the pool for consideration by birth parents.

Once chosen by birth parents the adopting couple will be supported through the next stages by their social worker. This time is an exciting and anxious time for adopting parents who very much want to be parents, take their child home and become a family.

Adoption within New Zealand

While there are not many children available for adoption within New Zealand, a number of new families are created each year by adopting a child. This varies from year to year and within each district. You may well ask whether it is worth while you attempting to adopt locally.

There is no guarantee that there will be a child available for you to adopt but keep in mind that children who are available do need parents and you might be them.

Inter-country Adoption (ICA)

A third seminar in the CYFs adoption series gives information on inter-country adoption. It is possible to adopt from certain overseas countries within New Zealand. Inter-country adoption is expensive, however you are assured of becoming a family. Inter-country adoption has special considerations, and information can be obtained from ICANZ, (Inter-Country Adoption New Zealand) the accredited organisation which facilitates ICA for New Zealanders, and also CYFs.

The New Family

It takes time for any new parents to build a lifestyle with their child. Because adoption tends to happen quickly the new parents may feel a little shocked as they try to come to terms with changes such as one income; one of you at home during the day; broken nights, obtaining clothes and equipment and the other things that go with a new child in the family. New parents will be delighted with their new life-

style and status but do need to be caring of themselves - it is a big life change and will take time to adjust. There is not quite the same lead up to becoming parents as with a pregnancy. Often it can take a long time waiting and then happen very fast.

The Legal Situation

A birth mother is not legally allowed to sign the interim adoption order until 10 full days have gone by since the birth of her child. She needs to see a separate lawyer from the adopting parents. Upon her signing, the adoptive parents are able to sign their side of the agreement to become the legal parents of the child and can take the child home to begin their lives as a family.

This interim order will need to be made a final order at about a year by applying to the court for the final order. At this point the adopted child is given a new birth certificate. Your lawyer will be familiar with the process of adoption and will help you through this.

In Conclusion

Moving to adoption requires thought and discussion. It is a big change with different goals and steps along the way. There are counsellors at the fertility clinics and social workers at CYFs who will support you and provide information to help with this transition. Families created by adoption are very similar in most ways to families with children born to them.

Sue Saunders

Counsellor

Fertility Associates - Hamilton

Copyright fertilityNZ 2004

For further information contact

Child Youth and Family

Adoption Information & Services Unit

Ph 0508 FAMILY

or look for your local number under Child Youth and Family in the blue pages of the telephone book.

ICANZ

Inter-country Adoption New Zealand

Ph: 09 623 9369

Fax: 09 623 9365

Email: office@icanz.gen.nz

Website: www.icanz.gen.nz

PO Box 96124

Balmoral