



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER  
FOR FOSTER CARE  
& PERMANENCY PLANNING**

at the Hunter College  
School of Social Work

# **INFORMATION PACKET:** *Adolescent Identity & the Impact on Adoptive Parents*

By Percio Bernal

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### **Summary: Adolescent Identity and the Impact it has on Adoptive Parents**

Adolescence is a trying time of life for both teenagers and their families. The physical aspects of adolescence — a growth spurt, breast development for girls, a deepening of the voice for boys — are obvious and happen quickly, whereas mental and emotional development may take years. The physical, cognitive, and social changes of adolescence open the door to pondering the meaning of adoption. This information packet will focus on identity. The adolescent is able to think in more complex ways about being different from others. Adopted teenagers may wonder who gave them their particular characteristics. They may want answers to questions their adoptive parents may not be able to provide: Where do I get my artistic talent? Was everyone in my birth family short? What is my ethnic background? Do I have brothers and sisters?

Adoption issues are highly significant to adolescent issues, and they interact in a way that exacerbates and sometimes inflames normal adolescent developmental tasks. Achieving the adolescent's tasks of developing a separate identity within and establishing appropriate independence from the family is only one piece of the charge for the adoptee. The major challenge for teenagers is to form their own **identity**. According to adoption experts Kenneth W. Watson and Miriam Reitz, those teenagers must define their values, beliefs, gender identification, career choice, and expectations of themselves. Identity issues can be difficult for adopted teens because they have two sets of parents. Not knowing about their birthparents can make them question who they really are. It becomes more challenging for them to sort out how they are similar to and different from both sets of parents. Their questions, fantasies and conflicted feelings regarding birth parents often intensify in adolescence.

Conversely, this has a major impact on adoptive parents and their families. Adoptive parents have to help process these issues, as these adolescents attempt to determine what kind of adult they can or will become. Adoptive parents are likely to be anxious when their adopted child reaches adolescence because they have to deal with their set of questions about their identity. In addition, they might deal with anger or criticism of how their adoptive parents helped them adjust to their adoptive status, withdrawal, fear of abandonment, issues of control, feeling of not belonging, and connection with their past.

## FACTS

- Adoption is a lifelong, intergenerational process, which unites the triad of birth families, adoptees, and adoptive families forever. Adoption, especially of adolescents, can lead to both great joy and tremendous pain. Recognizing the core issues in adoption is one intervention that can assist triad members and professionals working in adoption better to understand each other and the residual effects of the adoption experience.

### **There are several types of adoptions:**

- **Public:** Children in the public child welfare system are placed in permanent homes by public, government-operated agencies, or by private agencies contracted by a public agency to place waiting children. In 1992, 15.5% of adoptions (19,753) were public agency adoptions. (*Flango and Flango, 1994*) Between 1951 and 1975 the percentage of adoptive placements by public agencies more than doubled from 18% in 1951 to 38% in 1975 (*Maza, 1984*), and has since fallen to approximately 15% to 20% of all adoptions. (*Flango and Flango, 1994*)
- **Private:** In a **private agency** adoption, children are placed in non-relative homes through the services of a non-profit or for-profit agency, which may be licensed by the State in which it operates. In an **independent or non-agency** adoption, children are placed in non-relative homes directly by the birthparents or through the services of one of the following: a licensed or unlicensed facilitator, certified medical doctor, member of the clergy, or attorney. There were 47,627 adoptions (37.5%) of this type in 1992. (*Flango and Flango, 1994*)

The highest percentage of adoptions completed by private agencies was 45% in 1970.

Between 1951 and 1975, the percentage of adoptive placements not made under agency auspices declined substantially from 53% of all adoptions in 1951 to 23% of all adoptions in 1975. The lowest percentage was in 1971 and 1972 when independent adoptions constituted only 21% of all reported adoptions. (*Maza, 1984*)

- **Kinship:**

Children are placed in relatives' homes, with or without the services of a public agency.

- **Stepparent:**

Children are adopted by the spouse of one birth parent.

Of adoptions in 1992, the plurality (53,525, or 42%) were either kinship or stepparent adoptions. (*Flango and Flango, 1994*)

The proportion of adoptions by related individuals steadily increased from 1944 to 1975 until they constituted over 60% of all adoptions. Since almost all adoptions by related petitioners are handled independently, it is likely that by the 1970's a substantial proportion of independent adoptions were by related petitioners. (*Maza, 1984*) The late 1980s and 1990s showed dramatic increases in kinship placements in public agency adoptions as children entering foster care were placed in the homes of relatives, and these placements were finalized as kinship adoptions.

- **Transracial:** Children are placed with an adoptive family of another race. While these placements may be made by either a public or private agency, or may be independent, the term usually refers to the adoption of a child through the public child welfare system. The most recent estimates, which include intercountry adoptions, found that 8% of adoptions were transracial. (*Stolley, 1993*)

- **Intercountry/International:** Children who are citizens of a foreign nation are adopted by U.S. families and brought to the United States. This area of adoption has been practiced since the 1950's, but has shown a dramatic increase in the past decade. In 1992, there were 6,536(5%) international adoptees brought to the United States; in 1997, that number increased to 13,620. (*United States Department of State*)
- Based on current AFCARS estimates released January 2000, there are approximately 520,000 children currently in foster care in the United States. Of these, 117,000 are eligible for adoption. (US HHS, 2000)

Historically, the number of children in foster care has increased, while the proportion of children in foster care who are free for adoption has remained constant. In 1977, as in 1997, approximately 20% of the children in foster care were available for adoption. Of the children who were free for adoption in 1977, 50% were in adoptive placements. Of the children free for adoption in December, 1982, 34% were in adoptive placements. Thus, by December 1982, 33,000 children were waiting to be placed for adoption. (*Maza, 1983*)

### **Who are the children adopted from foster care?**

- **36,000** children were adopted from the public foster care system in **Fiscal Year 1998** (Adoptions finalized in federal fiscal year reported to AFCARS no later than May 16, 1999).

### **Children adopted from foster care, Fiscal Year 1998.**

- **Age of Children Adopted**

46% were 1-5 years old, 37% were 6-10 years old, 14% were 11-15 years old, 2% were 16-18 years old and 2% were under a year old when adopted from the public welfare system.

- **Gender of Children Adopted**

51% are male, while 48% are female.

- **Race/Ethnicity of Children Adopted**

38% of the children in foster care are White, while a **majority** (61%) are of **minority background**. Of these, 46% of all children are Black, 13% are Hispanic, 1% are American Indian, and 1% are Asian/Pacific Islander.

- **The Relationship of the Adoptive Parent(s)**

**65%** of the children adopted from foster care are adopted by former foster parents, 15% by relatives, approximately 20% by people unrelated to them and less than 1% by step-parents.

- **Families Receiving Subsidy**

**86%** of the families adopting children from foster care receive adoption subsidies to help in the long-term care of the child.

- **Adoptive Family Structure**

66% were adopted by a married couple, while 33% were adopted by a single parent.

## **Who are the children are waiting to be adopted?**

- **117,000** children in foster care are waiting to be adopted.

- **Age of Waiting Children When Removed From Parents/Caregivers**

29% were less than a year old, 42% were 1-5 years, 23% were 6-10 years, 6% were 11-15 years, and less than 1% were 16-18 years old when they were removed from their parents or caregivers.

- **Age of Waiting Children on March 31, 1999**

2% were less than one year old, 35% were 1-5 years, 37% were 6-10 years, 23% were 11-15 years, and 3% were 16-18 years old.

- **Gender of children waiting to be adopted**

**52%** are male, while 48% are female.

- **Race/Ethnicity**

Approximately **64%** of children waiting in foster care are of minority background; 32% are White. 51% of all foster children waiting for adoption are Black, 11% are Hispanic, 1% are American Indian, 1% are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 5% are unknown/unable to determine.

- **Number of Months Waiting Children Have Been in Continuous Foster Care**

Approximately less than 1% of waiting children resided in continuous foster care for less than a month. 3% resided in foster care 1-5 months, 6% resided 6-11 months, 8% resided 12-17 months, 10% resided 18-23 months, 10% resided 24-29 months, 9% resided 30-35 months, 26% resided 36-59 months, and 27% resided 60 or more months.

- **Current Placement Setting of Waiting Children**

**78%** of waiting children reside in a foster home (57% non-relative and 21% relative), 15% in a pre-adoptive home, 1% in trial home visits, 3% in group homes, 5% in institutions, and less than 1% are runaways or in supervised independent living.

The majority of children who are adopted come from the foster care system. Either, through non-relative homes through the services of a non-profit or for-profit agency, which may be licensed by the State in which it operates. This factor makes adoption for adolescents difficult as often they endured abuse or neglect, lived in several foster homes, or moved from relative to relative before finding a permanent family. Their sense of loss and rejection may be intense, and they may suffer from seriously low self-esteem.

They also can have severe emotional and behavioral difficulties as a result of early interruptions in the attachment process with their caregivers. It is no wonder that it is hard for them to trust adults — the adults in their early years, for whatever reason, did not meet their emotional needs. Usually not meeting their emotional needs leads to disruption or dissolution.

The term disruption is used to describe an adoption, which does not continue, resulting in the child returning to foster care and/or to another set of adoptive parent(s). The term dissolution is used to describe an adoption that fails after finalization, resulting in the child returning to foster care and/or another set of adoptive parent(s). The statistics below obtained from the National Adoption Clearinghouse, 1995 mentions that:

- Of children placed for adoption at ages **6 to 12**, the disruption rate is 9.7%. (*Barth, 1988*)
- Of children placed for adoption at ages **12 to 18**, the disruption rate is 13.5%. (*Barth, 1988*)
- Placements of **older children** and children with histories of **previous placements** and **longer stays** in the foster care system are more likely to disrupt (*Stolley, 1993*)
- The disruption rate **increases** as the age of the child at the time of adoption increases. (*Boyne et al., 1984; Barth and Berry, 1988*).

Furthermore, reading these statistics gives a clearer picture of why rarely adolescents are adopted or transition into independent living. Below are statistics of age distribution of children awaiting to be adopted and the finalization of age, which the average is 5-7 years old. In addition, the numbers drop dramatically for adolescents waiting to be adopted.

**TABLE 11-31.--AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN AWAITING ADOPTION, BY  
STATE, FISCAL YEAR 1998**  
[In percent; 103,329 total cases]

State	Less than 1	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-18
Alabama	2	31	39	21	6
Arizona	5	38	39	17	1
Arkansas	4	30	33	30	2
California	8	55	26	9	2
Colorado	2	30	39	26	3
Connecticut	1	37	40	19	3
Delaware	1	39	46	13	1
District of Columbia	1	40	43	15	1
Florida	3	32	37	25	3
Georgia <sup>1</sup>	2	33	36	24	5
Hawaii	2	32	31	24	10
Idaho	3	31	39	21	6
Illinois	2	36	40	21	2
Indiana <sup>1</sup>	2	44	32	18	4
Kansas <sup>1</sup>	8	20	23	39	11
Louisiana	2	31	41	24	2
Maine <sup>1</sup>	5	30	36	22	7
Maryland	1	31	43	22	2
Minnesota	3	23	37	29	8
Mississippi	1	27	37	26	9
Missouri	2	30	36	27	5
Montana	2	27	28	34	9
New Jersey	5	43	28	18	6
New Mexico	5	33	37	23	2
New York	1	30	38	28	3
North Carolina	5	35	33	23	4



North Dakota	25	27	30	17	2
Oklahoma	3	33	36	25	3
Oregon	3	43	39	14	1
Pennsylvania	3	36	37	21	3
Puerto Rico	3	18	41	31	6
Rhode Island <sup>1</sup>	1	40	41	15	2
South Carolina	3	30	34	28	5
Texas	3	35	35	24	3
Utah	7	35	37	19	2
Vermont	3	28	26	34	8
Virginia <sup>1</sup>	3	38	41	16	1
Washington	7	45	32	14	3
West Virginia	4	34	40	21	2
Wisconsin	2	32	36	25	6
Wyoming	2	26	38	28	6
Total	3	35	37	22	3

<sup>1</sup> State indicated general concern with reliability of 1998 data due to conversion process to Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS).  
Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**Child's Finalization Age (Grouped)**

**October 1, 1999 to September 30, 2000**

[Click here for National Estimates](#)

STATE	Child's Finalization Age (Grouped)						Total		Missing	Child's Finalization Age	
	under 1	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-18	19+	%	N		Mean Yrs	Median Yrs
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	N			
Alabama	2%	49%	33%	13%	2%	0%	100%	202	0%	6.79	5.95
Alaska	3%	38%	45%	14%	0%	0%	100%	202	0%	6.98	6.79

Arizona	1%	45%	37%	17%	1%	0%	100%	853	0%	6.99	6.46
Arkansas	3%	39%	27%	25%	5%	1%	100%	325	0%	8.01	7.35
California	2%	57%	29%	10%	2%	0%	100%	8692	1%	6.02	5.10
Colorado	3%	49%	32%	14%	2%	0%	100%	691	0%	6.52	5.76
Connecticut	0%	46%	38%	13%	1%	0%	100%	499	0%	6.90	6.23
Delaware	0%	58%	32%	10%	0%	0%	100%	103	0%	5.90	5.11
District of Columbia	2%	34%	45%	16%	3%	0%	100%	319	0%	7.75	7.35
Florida	1%	49%	34%	14%	2%	0%	100%	1609	0%	6.61	5.93
Georgia	1%	39%	40%	17%	3%	0%	100%	1057	0%	7.45	7.16
Hawaii	4%	53%	36%	7%	0%	0%	100%	280	0%	5.50	5.06
Idaho	8%	48%	31%	12%	1%	0%	100%	140	0%	5.84	4.81
Illinois	0%	40%	40%	18%	2%	0%	100%	5668	0%	7.51	7.11
Indiana	1%	39%	38%	19%	4%	0%	100%	1147	0%	7.78	7.21
Iowa	2%	45%	34%	17%	1%	0%	100%	735	0%	7.04	6.47
Kansas	0%	40%	33%	21%	6%	0%	100%	468	1%	8.00	7.48
Kentucky	2%	45%	33%	17%	4%	0%	100%	395	0%	7.03	6.39
Louisiana	1%	35%	41%	22%	2%	0%	100%	476	0%	7.81	7.43
Maine	0%	45%	40%	14%	0%	0%	100%	411	0%	6.85	6.66
Maryland	2%	37%	45%	15%	1%	0%	100%	537	0%	7.21	7.14
Massachusetts	1%	48%	37%	13%	1%	0%	100%	861	0%	6.52	6.04
Michigan	1%	43%	37%	16%	2%	0%	100%	2803	0%	7.10	6.65
Minnesota	2%	41%	39%	18%	0%	0%	100%	614	0%	7.08	6.91
Mississippi	1%	33%	43%	18%	4%	0%	100%	288	0%	7.85	7.64
Missouri	2%	42%	35%	17%	3%	0%	100%	1265	0%	7.19	6.77
Montana	1%	53%	28%	16%	2%	0%	100%	236	0%	6.56	5.51
Nebraska	0%	42%	41%	16%	2%	0%	100%	300	0%	7.16	6.82
Nevada	3%	60%	26%	10%	2%	0%	100%	231	0%	5.64	4.73
New Hampshire	1%	45%	46%	7%	1%	0%	100%	96	0%	6.73	6.50
New Jersey	1%	58%	30%	10%	2%	0%	100%	837	0%	6.11	5.26
New Mexico	1%	47%	38%	14%	0%	0%	100%	347	0%	6.76	6.22
New York	0%	32%	38%	26%	4%	1%	100%	4234	0%	8.58	8.31
North Carolina	4%	45%	34%	15%	2%	0%	100%	1336	1%	6.77	6.10
North Dakota	42%	34%	18%	5%	1%	0%	100%	105	0%	3.42	1.08

Ohio	6%	48%	29%	14%	3%	0%	100%	2044	0%	6.30	5.40
Oklahoma	1%	41%	35%	19%	4%	0%	100%	1062	0%	7.51	6.98
Oregon	0%	51%	34%	14%	1%	0%	100%	831	0%	6.65	5.83
Pennsylvania	1%	40%	38%	18%	2%	0%	100%	1712	0%	7.48	7.06
Puerto Rico	5%	48%	34%	10%	3%	1%	100%	231	0%	6.31	5.69
Rhode Island	2%	52%	30%	15%	1%	0%	100%	260	0%	6.35	5.39
South Carolina	2%	47%	32%	17%	1%	0%	100%	378	0%	6.91	6.08
South Dakota	4%	55%	27%	14%	0%	0%	100%	94	0%	6.02	5.25
Tennessee	0%	35%	41%	20%	3%	0%	100%	431	0%	7.97	7.76
Texas	3%	52%	30%	13%	1%	0%	100%	2029	0%	6.02	5.11
Utah	8%	51%	30%	11%	1%	0%	100%	303	0%	5.72	5.02
Vermont	2%	48%	31%	18%	1%	0%	100%	122	0%	7.01	5.98
Virginia	0%	36%	42%	19%	3%	0%	100%	448	0%	7.81	7.30
Washington	1%	56%	32%	9%	1%	0%	100%	1141	0%	6.00	5.25
West Virginia	1%	33%	45%	20%	2%	0%	100%	352	0%	7.68	7.67
Wisconsin	3%	42%	37%	17%	2%	0%	100%	736	0%	7.02	6.48
Wyoming	0%	39%	41%	15%	5%	0%	100%	61	0%	7.45	6.84

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Children's Bureau  
Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS)

### **Policies and Legislations**

- On November 19, 1997, the President signed the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-89). The law profoundly affects the adoption of foster children, and requires changes in State law. Also, it is the most recent federal legislation representing both a continued commitment towards family and an attempt to promote adoption.

The following organizations are among many that provide information about adoption advocacy and public policy.

**Adoptees' Liberty Movement Association (The ALMA Society)**

P.O. Box 85  
Debbville, NJ 07834

E-mail: [MAnderson@almasociety.org](mailto:MAnderson@almasociety.org)

URL: <http://www.almasociety.com/>

Adoptees' Liberty Movement Association (ALMA), a membership organization, is an adoption reunion registry. ALMA advocates for the right of adopted persons to know the truth of their origin. The ALMA registry has a one-time registration fee of \$50.

**American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (AAAA)**

P.O. Box 33053  
Washington, DC 20033

Phone: (202) 832-2222

E-mail: [webmaster@adoptionattorneys.org](mailto:webmaster@adoptionattorneys.org)

URL: <http://www.adoptionattorneys.org/>

AAAA is a national membership association of attorneys who practice, or have otherwise distinguished themselves, in the field of adoption law. AAAA works to promote the reform of adoption laws and to disseminate information on ethical adoption practices. Their Membership Directory, including members from the U. S. and Canada, lists attorneys who are well versed in the complexities of adoption law as well as interstate and international regulations regarding adoption.

**American Adoption Congress (AAC)**

P.O. Box 42730  
Washington, DC 20015

Phone: (202) 483-3399

(800) 888-7970

E-mail: [ameradoptioncong@aol.com](mailto:ameradoptioncong@aol.com)

URL: <http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org>

The American Adoption Congress (AAC) is an international network of individuals and organizations committed to honesty and openness in adoption and to reforms that protect all of those involved from abuse or exploitation. Membership is open to adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents, professionals, and all others who share a commitment to the AAC's goals.

**Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC)**

American Public Human Services Association  
810 First Street NE  
Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20002-4267

Phone: (202) 682-0100

Fax: (202) 289-6555  
E-mail:[icpcinbox@APHSA.org](mailto:icpcinbox@APHSA.org)  
URL: <http://icpc.aphsa.org>

The Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children is a uniform State law establishing a contract among party States to ensure that children placed across state lines receive adequate protection and services. The primary function of the ICPC is to protect the interests of both the children and the States by requiring that certain procedures be followed in the interstate placement of children who are being adopted, placed with relatives, or going into residential care or foster family homes.

**Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (AAICAMA)**

American Public Human Services Association  
810 First Street NE  
Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20002-4267

Phone: (202) 682-0100  
Fax: (202) 289-6555  
E-mail:[loppenheim@aphsa.org](mailto:loppenheim@aphsa.org)  
URL: <http://aaicama.aphsa.org>

The Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance facilitates the administration of the ICAMA. The Compact is the legal mechanism by which member States regulate and coordinate the interstate delivery of services to children with special needs who are adopted pursuant to adoption assistance agreements. Along with advocating State participation in the ICAMA, the Association provides technical and legal assistance, education and training, and materials on practice and policy issues.

**Black Administrators in Child Welfare, Inc. (BACW)**

440 First Street NW  
Third Floor  
Washington, DC 20001-2085

Phone:(202) 662-4284  
Fax: (202) 638-4004  
URL: <http://www.blackadministrators.org>

Black Administrators in Child Welfare is committed to strengthening and supporting the healthy development of African American children, families, and communities through advocacy, leadership development, consultation, and training.

**Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)**

Headquarters  
440 First Street NW  
Third Floor  
Washington, DC 20001-2085

Phone: (202) 638-2952  
Fax: (202) 638-4004  
E-mail: [webweaver@cwla.org](mailto:webweaver@cwla.org)  
URL: <http://www.cwla.org/>

The Child Welfare League of America is the oldest national organization serving vulnerable children, youth, and their families. CWLA provides training, consultation, and technical assistance to child welfare professionals and agencies while also educating the public on emerging issues that affect abused, neglected, and at-risk children. Through its publications, conferences, and teleconferences, CWLA shares information on emerging trends, specific topics in child welfare practice (family foster care, kinship care, adoption, positive youth development), and Federal and State policies.

**Concerned United Birthparents, Inc. (CUB)**

P.O. Box 230457  
Encinitas, CA 92023

Fax: (760) 929-1879  
Toll-Free: (800) 822-2777  
E-mail: [info@CUBirthparents.org](mailto:info@CUBirthparents.org)  
URL: <http://www.cubirthparents.org>

CUB's mission is to provide support to birthparents who have relinquished a child to adoption, to provide resources to help prevent unnecessary family separations, to educate the public about the life-long effects on all who are touched by adoption, and to advocate for fair and ethical adoption laws, policies, and practices.

**Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption**

4288 West Dublin Granville Road  
Dublin, OH 43017

Fax: (614) 766-3871  
Toll-Free: (800) ASK-DTFA  
E-mail: [adoption@wendys.com](mailto:adoption@wendys.com)  
URL: <http://www.davethomasfoundationforadoption.com/>

The vision of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption is that "every child will have a permanent home and a loving family." The Foundation strives to make the vision a reality by funding various national initiatives that directly affect waiting children and by expanding the public's awareness of adoption.

**Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute**

120 Wall Street  
20th Floor  
New York, NY 10005

Phone: (212) 269-5080  
Fax: (212) 269-1962  
E-mail: [geninfo@adopioninstitute.org](mailto:geninfo@adopioninstitute.org)

URL: <http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/>

The Adoption Institute seeks to improve the quality of information about adoption, to enhance the understanding and perceptions about adoption, and to advance adoption policy and practice.

### **Inter-National Adoption Alliance (IAA)**

PMB 154  
2441 Q Old Fort Parkway  
Murfreesboro, TN 37128

E-mail: [interadopt@comcast.net](mailto:interadopt@comcast.net)

URL: <http://www.i-a-a.org/>

The Inter-National Adoption Alliance is a nonprofit organization designed to provide cultural resources for transracial/transcultural adoptees and their families, to advocate for those adoptees and families, and to increase awareness of children waiting to be adopted worldwide and the programs that serve them.

### **Joint Council on International Children's Services (JCICS)**

1320 19th Street NW  
Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036

Phone: (703) 535-8045

Fax: (703) 535-8049

E-mail: [jcics@jcics.org](mailto:jcics@jcics.org)

URL: <http://www.jcics.org/>

The Joint Council on International Children's Services is the world's oldest and largest affiliation of licensed, nonprofit international adoption agencies. JCICS membership also includes parent groups, advocacy organizations, and individuals who have an interest in inter-country adoption. JCICS member agencies subscribe to established Standards of Practice designed to protect the rights of children, birth parents, and adoptive parents.

### **Little People of America Adoption Committee (LPA)**

LPA National Headquarters  
P.O. Box 65030  
Lubbock, TX 79464-5030

Toll-Free: (888) LPA-2001

E-mail: [LPADataBase@juno.com](mailto:LPADataBase@juno.com)

URL: [http://www.lpaonline.org/lpa\\_adoptions.html](http://www.lpaonline.org/lpa_adoptions.html)

The purpose of the Little People of America Adoption Committee is to find a loving home for every dwarf child. The role of LPA is to act as a link between perspective parents and adoption agencies that represent dwarf children. LPA is not an adoption agency, but a referral source only. By outreaching to adoption agencies, doctors, hospitals, geneticists, and others, LPA is able

to locate available dwarf children for adoption and perspective parents who are interested in adopting them.

**National Adoption Center (NAC)**

1500 Walnut Street  
Suite 701  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Toll-Free:(800) TO-ADOPT

E-mail: [nac@nationaladoptioncenter.org](mailto:nac@nationaladoptioncenter.org)

URL: <http://www.nationaladoptioncenter.org>

The National Adoption Center expands adoption opportunities for children throughout the United States, particularly children with special needs and from minority cultures.

**National Adoption Foundation (NAF)**

100 Mill Plain Road  
Danbury, CT 06811

URL:<http://www.nafadopt.org/default.asp>

The National Adoption Foundation provides financial assistance, services, and support to families before, during, and after their adoptions. The Foundation's programs are available to any family whether they are adopting an infant, a child from abroad, or a child from foster care. In addition to providing financial assistance, NAF seeks to educate policy makers and the public about the financial barriers to adoption and the unmet needs of many families. The National Adoption Foundation is the only national resource dedicated exclusively to providing financial support, information, and services directly to adoptive families.

**National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC)**

1825 Marion Street  
Suite 340  
Denver, CO 80218

Toll-Free:(888) 828-NACC

E-mail: [advocate@NACCchildlaw.org](mailto:advocate@NACCchildlaw.org)

URL: <http://www.naccchildlaw.org>

The National Association of Counsel for Children works to improve the legal protection and representation of children by training and educating child advocates and by effecting policy and legal systems change. The NACC sponsors conferences and seminars on important issues confronting child advocates and files amicus curiae briefs in selected court cases affecting children. The Association also has a legislative agenda, a national child advocate awards program, and a speakers bureau.

**National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)**

444 North Capitol Street NW



Suite 515  
Washington, DC 20001

Phone: (202) 624-5400  
(303) 364-7700

Fax: (202) 737-1069  
(303) 364-7800

E-mail: [info@ncsl.org](mailto:info@ncsl.org)

URL: <http://www.ncsl.org>

The National Conference of State Legislatures promotes information sharing by tracking legislation and policy issues in State legislatures and the effect of Federal initiatives on the States. The NCSL offers information, publications, conferences, consulting services, and professional development seminars. The NCSL also advocates for the States by lobbying, testifying, and collaborating on Capitol Hill.

### **National Council For Adoption (NCFA)**

225 North Washington Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314-2561

Phone: (703) 299-6633

Fax: (703) 299-6004

E-mail: [ncfa@adoptioncouncil.org](mailto:ncfa@adoptioncouncil.org)

URL: <http://www.ncfa-usa.org>

The National Council For Adoption promotes the well-being of children, birthparents, and adoptive families by informing policy leaders, the media, social service providers, and the public about the positive option of adoption. The Council is a charitable membership organization with a variety of functions: a think tank for adoption awareness and information, a provider of public information and education, and an advocate for adoption.

### **National Council for Single Adoptive Parents, Inc. (NCSAP)**

P.O. Box 55

Wharton, NJ 07885

E-mail: [ncsap@hotmail.com](mailto:ncsap@hotmail.com)

URL: <http://www.adopting.org/ncsap.html>

The National Council for Single Adoptive Parents (formerly the Committee for Single Adoptive Parents) was founded to inform and assist single people in the United States who want to adopt children. The Council supports the right of adoptable children to have loving families, regardless of differences in race, creed, color, national origin, or disability. The National Council for Single Adoptive Parents is a member of the Joint Council on International Children's Services and the North American Council on Adoptable Children.

### **National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption**

16250 Northland Drive

Suite 120  
Southfield, MI 48075

Phone: (248) 443-7080  
Fax: (248) 443-7099  
E-mail: [nrc@nrcadoption.org](mailto:nrc@nrcadoption.org)  
URL: <http://www.nrcadoption.org>

The National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption assists States, Tribes, and other federally-funded child welfare agencies improve their ability to ensure the safety, well being, and permanency of abused and neglected children through adoption and post legal adoption services, program planning, and policy development. The Center, which believes every child is adoptable and every child deserves a permanent family, provides training, consultation and informational materials for professionals, organizations and parents. The Center is a service of the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

### **North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)**

970 Raymond Avenue  
Suite 106  
St. Paul, MN 55114

Phone: (651) 644-3036  
Fax: (651) 644-9848  
E-mail: [info@nacac.org](mailto:info@nacac.org)  
URL: <http://www.nacac.org>

Founded by adoptive parents, the North American Council on Adoptable Children is committed to meeting the needs of waiting children in the foster care system and the families who adopt them. The Council advocates the right of every child to a permanent, continuous, nurturing, and culturally sensitive family, and presses for the legal adoptive placement of any child denied that right.

### **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (HHS)**

200 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Phone: (202) 619-0257  
Toll-Free: (877) 696-6675  
URL: <http://www.hhs.gov/>

### **Practice Tips/Best Models**

These practice tips are helpful if you see the following behaviors. These behaviors may indicate a teen is struggling with adoption issues:

- comments about being treated unfairly compared to the family's birth children;
- a new problem in school, such as trouble paying attention;
- a sudden preoccupation with the unknown;
- problems with peers; or
- shutting down emotionally and refusing to share feelings.

If you notice these behaviors, it is very important to communicate with him/her.

- Open communication is very important. Also, educating yourself through books or workshops run by agencies that provide post-adoption services. "The time to start talking about these issues is when children are younger," says MaryLou Edgar, post-adoption specialist with Tressler Lutheran Children's Services in Wilmington, Delaware. Nonetheless, even if these discussions have not taken place earlier, it is up to the parents to initiate them with their teenagers, Edgar advises.
- Join an adoptive parent support group, which can be a valuable resource for families. The [National Adoption Information Clearinghouse](#) can refer you to adoptive parent support groups in your area. Support groups also exist for adopted teenagers.

"There is a significant difference in the way teenagers perceive themselves when they have information about their birth families — ethnic heritage, abilities, education, or just what they looked like," says Marcie Griffen, post-adoption counselor at Hope Cottage Adoption Services in Dallas, Texas. "When they know why they were placed for adoption, it tends to help their self-esteem and give them a better sense of who they are." Here are some tips that can be used to help your adolescent:

- Have your child involved in a support group for adoptive children. Support groups allow children to identify with others who share experiences and understand the normalcy of their experiences (Janus, 1997).
- Provide the child with detailed information about his/her birthparents, if available. Such information should include the circumstances of the birth, reasons why the child was put up for adoption, interests and the talents of the parents, and ethnic/racial background of the birthparents (Melina, 1989). This information should be presented in a nonjudgmental manner.
- Educate your child about his heritage.
- If you have pictures of your child's birthparents, share them with him/her. This will give your child an idea about how he/she may look in the future (Melina, 1989).

- Read to your child or have your child read books about children who have been adopted. Recommended books are *We Adopted You*, Benjamin Koo by Linda Walvoord Girard, and *Horace* by Holly Keller.

Other tips to help your adolescent in identity development are:

- Making Identity issues “normal”. Parents need to discuss issues related to adoption and child’s past regularly. Also, parents can help the adolescent’s curiosity about their past by reframing their past in a positive way.
- Permitting Exploration. Encourage the adolescent independence without cutting the child loose. Also, don’t harbor on your fears of their background, for example that they are going to be drug addicts just like their “real parents”.
- Providing Opportunities to Succeed. Self-esteem and identity are linked concepts.
- Adoption Stories and Lifebooks. Develop an adoption story when they first arrive to your home. Develop an explanation of how they joined your family.
- Help them fill in the blanks. Assist or give them the opportunity to search for their birth parents. Their filling in their blanks of the past helps them with all those assumptions they had in the past. Also, it gives them a better meaning to their identity.

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## Websites

### **National Organization and Associations**

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp>

The National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work

129 East 79<sup>th</sup> Street

New York, NY 10021

212.452.7000.

NRCFCPP at the Hunter College School of Social Work is a training, technical assistance, and information services organization dedicated to increasing the capacity of child welfare agencies to provide children with safe, permanent families in supportive communities.

### **The Child Welfare League of America**

<http://www.cwla.org>

50 F Street NW, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor

Washington, DC 2001-2085

(202) 638-2952

The Child Welfare League of America, an association of public and not-profit child welfare agencies, holds a national conference every two years on kinship care as it relates to the child welfare system.

### **Casey Family Programs**

<http://www.casey.org/cnc/>

National Center for Resource Family Support

1808 Eye St. NW, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor

Washington, D.C. 20006-5427

Phone: (202) 467-4441 Toll free; 888.295.6727

CNC is the national information and referral arm of Casey Family Programs, a direct service operating foundation that provides an array of services for children and youth, with foster care and adoption as its core.

### **National Adoption Information Clearinghouse**

<http://www.calib.com/naic/>

330 C Street, SW Washington, DC 20447

Phone: (703) 352-3488 or (888) 251-0075

Fax: (703) 385-3206



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