

Module #10 Openness in Adoption

Handout #10.1 Pros and Cons of Different Types of Adoption by Level of Openness

Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway

Pros of Each Type of Adoption

	Confidential Adoptions	Mediated (Semi-Open) Adoptions	Open Adoptions
Birth Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides real choice for birth parents when compared to open adoption Privacy Some feel this provides a sense of closure and ability to move on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows for some information transfer between birth and adoptive parents (and perhaps the child) Some privacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased ability to deal with grief and loss Comfort in knowing child's well-being Sense of control over decision-making in placement Potential to develop a healthy relationship with the child as he or she grows Less pain and guilt about the decision May make the decision to place for adoption easier (compared to a contested termination of parental rights trial)
Adoptive Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No need to physically share the child with birth parents No danger of birth parent interference or co-parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater sense of control over the process Roles may be more clearly defined than in either closed or open options Increased sense of entitlement compared to confidential adoptions Enhanced ability to answer child's questions about his or her history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased sense of having the "right" to parent and increased ability for confident parenting Potential for authentic relationship with the birth family More understanding of child's history Increased empathy for birth parents Less fear of birth parents reclaiming child because they know the parent and their wishes Delight in being "chosen" as a parent
Adopted Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection from unstable or emotionally disturbed birth parents 	<p>Only true when relationship is "shared" with the adopted child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Genetic and birth history known Birthparents are "real" not "fantasy" 	<p>Only true when relationship is "shared" with the adopted child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct access to birth parents and history Need to search is eliminated

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive adjustment is promoted in adoptee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity questions are answered (who do I look like? Why was I placed?) • Eases feelings of abandonment • Lessening of fantasies: birth parents are "real" • Increased circle of supportive adults • Increased attachment to adoptive family (especially if the birth parents support the adoption) • Preservation of connections (e.g., siblings, relatives) • Lessens loyalty conflicts (according to recent research) • Exposure to racial and ethnic heritage • Ability for evolving, dynamic, and developmentally appropriate account of the adoption
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Cons of Each Type of Adoption

	Confidential Adoptions	Mediated(Semi-Open) Adoptions	Open Adoptions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No contact between birth and adoptive families. • No identifying information is provide • Only non-Identifying Information (e.g., height, hair color, medical history) is provided through a third party (e.g., an agency or attorney) 	<p>Non-Identifying contact is made (via cards, letters, pictures) through a third party (e.g., agency or attorney)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct interaction between birth and adoptive families • Identities are known.
Birth Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less grief resolution due to lack of information about the child's well-being • May encourage denial of fact that child was born and placed with another family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of potential for direct relationship with adoptive family (and/or child) • Increased grief in the initial years, less later • Loss of contact if intermediary changes or leaves (i.e, staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full responsibility for setting relationship limits and boundaries • Potential abuse of trust (fewer safeguards) • Potential disappointment if adoptive family

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		<p>turnover, policy changes, or agency closings)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth mother may feel obligated to place child due to the emotional or financial support given by the prospective adoptive parents 	<p>cannot meet all expectations or needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth mother may feel obligated to place child due to the emotional or financial support given by the prospective adoptive parents
Adoptive Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for denial of "adopted family" or fertility status • Increased fear, less empathy for birth parents • No access to additional medical information about birth family • Less control: agency controls information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of the full relationship with the birth parents • Lack of ability to have questions answered immediately • Potentially troubling cards, letters or pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full responsibility for setting relationship limits and boundaries • Potential pressure: accept openness or no adoption • Potential difficulty with emotionally disturbed birth parents • Potential for supporting both child and birth parents (emotionally)
Adopted Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibly adolescent identity confusion (unable to compare physical and emotional traits of birth family) • Limited access to information that others take for granted • Potential preoccupation with adoption issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to confidential adoptions, if information not shared with the adopted person • Potential perception that it is unsafe to interact with birth family directly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clean break for assimilation into family, which some feel is necessary • Potential feelings of rejection of contact stops • Difficulty explaining the relationship to peers • Potential for playing families against one another