



FINALLY A FAMILY

HELP FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS OF SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION TO COAC

COAC is an adoption services organization that offers programs to parents interested in adopting children with special needs in the New York City foster care system. Since its inception, COAC has been helping parents through the adoption process step-by-step.

Each month, COAC's staff holds orientation programs for prospective adoptive parents. The programs are conducted in both English and Spanish. The orientations provide information about children available for adoption, and give an overview of both the adoption process in New York State, and the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP) training. Equally important, the orientations provide an opportunity for prospective parents to ask whatever questions they may have. Many of these questions are addressed in this publication. If you have a question that has not been dealt with, COAC's staff will try to help you find the answer.

Some Facts About COAC...

COAC was founded in 1970 by a group of adoptive parents who, alarmed at the length of time it took to adopt a child in foster care, formed a support group to develop strategies for speeding up the adoption process.

The COAC of today emerged from these roots to become a unique, state-wide organization that expedites adoptions for children who are languishing in foster care, in need of permanency and stability.

COAC's current programs

Adoption Education and Referral Program. For New Yorkers interested in adoption, COAC serves as a clearinghouse for information on the adoption process. Prospective adoptive parents who decide they are not interested in adopting a special needs child, will be referred to an appropriate agency to meet their needs.

AIDS Orphans Adoption Program. HIV+ parents and parents living with AIDS are helped to create a permanency plan for their children so they can exercise control of their children's future and avoid placing them into the foster care system. This is the only city-wide program in which a specialized social and legal services team works with HIV+ parents, even, when necessary, helping to recruit guardians or adoptive parents for those families whose kin are unable to raise the children.

Care for the Caregivers. This program provides a continuum of support services to grandparents and other relative caregivers of children of HIV-positive and substance abusing parents.

Every Child Counts Adoption Program. The placement of special needs children with adoptive parents is the cornerstone of this program. Under the program, COAC recruits prospective adoptive parents and assists them through all phases of the adoption process and placement of a child. During the application process, the staff conducts orientations and provides private interviews to help families evaluate their capacity to adopt. After the evaluation process is completed, families are required to attend the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP) training. The training provides skills for parenting children with special needs and helps families decide whether adoption is right for them. COAC's Family Coordinators assist families through every step of the adoption process. This includes the homestudy, the identification and placement of a child, and support to the family unit until the adoption is finalized. After finalization, families are provided post-adoption services.

La Esperanza Para Los Niños Que Esperan – Hope For The Children Who Wait.

This is an adoption recruitment project whose focus is the recruitment of permanent adoptive homes for legally freed Hispanic children age 10 and over, and in sibling groups of all ages, from the New York City foster care system, who do not have an adoptive resource. Through city-wide recruitment and community-based outreach, prospective adoptive parents are informed of this urgent need within the Latino community. Interested and qualified applicants are then fully prepared and equipped for the adoption process. Esperanza staff collaborates with the foster care/adoption agency staff to match prospective adoptive families with waiting children, and support the newly formed families throughout the placement process until adoption finalization.

New York City Adoption Resource Center (NYCARC). The purpose of NYCARC is to provide comprehensive post adoption services to prevent the return of the adopted child to foster care. COAC serves as lead agency to a network of “adoption competent” organizations and professionals providing services to adoptive families following adoption finalization.

Replication Consultation and Training for Other Agencies. In response to many requests for assistance in replicating COAC's AIDS Orphans Adoption Program, COAC provides training and assistance.

This publication is designed to help prospective adoptive parents understand the various phases in the adoption process, and to help them shorten the length of time it takes to adopt a child. It is meant to be used along with the information provided by COAC's orientation program, and contains much of the same material.

WHAT IS ADOPTION?

Adoption is a legal arrangement that enables the adoptive parent and the adoptive child to have the same rights, privileges and responsibilities that birth families have. It is a means of meeting the physical and emotional needs of a child by legally transferring ongoing parental responsibilities for the child from birth parents to adoptive parents.

TYPES OF ADOPTION

Foster Care Adoptions are performed by private or public adoption agencies that place children out of foster care into adoptive families. COAC specializes in this type of adoption. Costs are minimal, and non-recurring expenses for such items as attorney's fees, physical exams, copies of certificates, and court costs may be reimbursed. COAC does not charge for its services.

Foreign Adoptions are adoptions of children who live outside the United States. COAC can refer families to agencies certified to do foreign adoptions.

Independent or Private Placement Adoptions are those arranged by a lawyer or a doctor who helps a birth mother place her child for adoption. Usually this involves paying prenatal and birth expenses of the mother, attorney's fees, etc. COAC does not participate in this type of adoption.

Maternity or Private Agency Infant Adoptions are those arranged by an agency that works with the birth mother to place her child with a family that she may have helped to select. COAC can refer families to agencies which handle these adoptions.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO ADOPT?

New York State regulations require prospective adoptive parents to be 18 years old or over, and U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents of the United States.

Single persons, married and non-married couples without children, and families who already have children by birth or who have adopted children may adopt. Same sex couples must meet the same standards used to evaluate heterosexual applicants. However, in cases of domestic partners, only one partner may adopt. If married and living separate and apart from his or her mate, the prospective parent must present an affidavit attesting that he or she has been living apart for a period of three years or more prior to the commencement of the adoption proceeding.

Adoptive parents must have their own legal income, and be able to show that they are able to live within their means. You do not need to be working as long as you have enough income to support yourself; your income may come from public assistance or benefits such as SSI. A couple where both parties work must be able to show that they have enough income to live on if one stops working, without using money designated as subsidy for the child.

Adoptive parents must be treated with equal opportunity regardless of age, sexual preference, religion, and race.

Adoptive parents must be healthy. That is, they must not have any illnesses that would prevent them from caring for a child, and this must be certified by a medical report.

Adoptive parents must participate in the required screening for child abuse, and fingerprinting for criminal activity.

Adoptive parents should be candid. Some people worry that they will not be allowed to adopt if they have ever been in trouble with the law. Any criminal record should be disclosed. While some criminal records disqualify an applicant for purposes of adoption, some do not. If undisclosed facts become known during the adoption process, the adoption may be delayed, or even denied. The important thing is to be open about your past.

A parent profile study has identified some characteristics of adoptive parents that seem to predict success in waiting child adoptions. These are listed in Appendix I. Readers of this publication may want to compare their own characteristics to those in the profile.

THE DECISION TO ADOPT

Choosing to add a new member to the family is always a big decision, often involving more people than just the ones who are most immediately concerned. This is particularly true when the new family member is not an adult (like a fiancée or an aging parent) but a child whose presence will affect the routines of everyone in the household. When the child is one with special needs, the changes can be more numerous and more stressful. How can prospective parents find guidance in making one of the most important decisions of their lives?

First, read articles and books about adoption of special needs children. These will give you a general overview of the wide variety of factors you may need to take into account.

Second, it's a good idea to talk with other adoptive parents, who can give you a feeling for specific situations that arise on a day-to-day basis, and tell you their experience in coping with them.

Third, talk with your own family members and friends. These are the people who will come into contact with your adopted child, and whose feelings must be considered. You may need to depend on them for help, and you need to know whether that will be possible. This does not mean that you should let other people talk you out of (or into) your decision; only that you will make your decision with full awareness of what is involved and willingness to be responsible for its results.

Fourth, discuss your interest in adopting a special needs child with a professional. Interview several agencies and attend orientation meetings. An experienced social worker can be a valuable source of information about the considerations involved in adopting special needs children.

HOW COAC CAN HELP

COAC can provide help at every stage of the adoption process.

COAC actively recruits adoptive parents for special needs children. It is the oldest independent program in New York City that recruits minority parents for special needs children and then guides them through the adoption process. COAC's interventions have proven to shorten the adoption process by six months to two years.

Through private screenings, MAPP trainings, and personal interviews COAC staff helps a family to determine whether or not they are really ready to adopt, and what kind of child or children they prefer.

COAC will undertake a certified homestudy. This will serve as a guide for COAC's Family Coordinator, the prospective parents and other involved professionals to make informed decisions throughout the adoption process.

COAC will provide information about available children and assist families through the selection process. When a child has been chosen and the family is ready to adopt, COAC will refer the family to the appropriate agency. The selected child's psycho-social history will be shared with the family. COAC will arrange a meeting with the adoption agency that will include the prospective adoptive family, COAC's Family Coordinator, the child's social worker and other appropriate staff members.

COAC will go with prospective parents to meet a child. The experienced staff person may observe things an inexperienced parent doesn't notice.

COAC serves as an advocate for the prospective parents with the adoption agency, keeping the adoption process on track, providing continuity in the system, and avoiding delays that turn-over among agency personnel may cause.

At the parents' request, COAC will attend the finalization hearing. After finalization, COAC can provide follow-up assistance in the form of counseling, parent training, and support groups.

FINDING THE RIGHT CHILD

Children enter the city's foster care system because of abuse, neglect, or abandonment. When a child is in foster care, New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS) becomes the child's legal custodian.

At the close of the year 2000, the Administration for Children Services (ACS) had completed adoptions for approximately 4,000 children from its foster care caseload of 32,000. While these numbers indicate ACS has increased adoptions in recent years, a disturbing number of children remain in care in need of families. All are children who deserve a loving, permanent family. Many of them are children who are called "hard to place" because they are children with special needs. These are the children most in need of adoptive families, and who are COAC's primary concern.

"Special needs" children are typically:

- minority group members: over 60% are African-American, and more than 30% are Hispanic
- older: many are between the ages of 7 and 13
- handicapped: some have mental, physical or emotional disabilities
- members of sibling groups: they need to be adopted together

Many of these children have been in foster care for several years and have had several placements. The majority live in foster family homes. Some, however, who are between 9 and 17 years old, live in group homes. Children with the most severe psychological or health problems have usually been placed in Residential Treatment Centers, from which they may be adopted, but where they reside until they are considered able to live in a family setting.

During the orientation process, COAC's staff shows prospective parents copies of New York State's Adoption Album called "Our Children, Our Families" and New York City's Family Album. These resource books feature photos and brief biographies of children awaiting adoption. The State's Album shows children in New York State who have been free for adoption for at least 90 days but are not in a pre-adoptive placement. The City's Album has children from New York City only. It has more special needs children, but no babies. "Faces of Adoption" on the Internet is another source for identifying children, as are Adoption Fairs and other special events.

Identifying a child one would like to adopt, however, does not always mean that it will be possible to adopt that child. Although children pictured in these Albums are legally free for adoption, they may have been matched or placed since the publication of the photo. This is an example of where COAC can help, in ascertaining whether a child is still available for adoption.

If the prospective parents do not find a child in one of the resource books, COAC will send information on the prospective parents to agencies that may have other children to match with their family.

HOW CHILDREN BECOME LEGALLY FREE

Children become legally free by the legal procedure called Termination of Parental Rights (TPR). Termination is accomplished either by a court order or because the parents have surrendered the child for adoption by signing a voluntary surrender agreement. After parental rights have been terminated, whether voluntarily or by court order, the consent of the birth parents to adoption is not required.

TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS BY COURT ORDER

When a child comes into foster care, the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) will place the child with one of its authorized agencies to provide the child with foster parenting, services, monitoring and supervision.

The foster care agency will provide services to the child's birth family to determine whether it will be possible to reunite the family. The services include developing a service plan agreement stating what the family needs to do before the child can be returned. If the family does not live up to the agreement, the agency will ask the court to terminate parental rights. The decision is made by a judge, after hearing testimony from the agency's social worker and others.

In a court-ordered termination, the child's agency petitions the court to involuntarily terminate parental rights. Grounds for this termination include abandonment, mental illness or incompetence of the birth parents, permanent neglect, or severe and repeated abuse. The ACS becomes the child's legal guardian.

TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS BY SURRENDER

A parent, or other person legally responsible for a child, can voluntarily surrender parental rights by signing an agreement giving up all rights and responsibilities to the child, and waiving the right to contest the child's adoption. The surrender agreement must be approved by either Family Court or Surrogate Court.

It is important to remember that in most cases, both parents' parental rights must be terminated for a child to be legally free. Prospective adoptive parents should ask their social worker whether the child's father, as well as the mother, must surrender parental rights.

The 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), a federal law, requires child welfare officials to consider termination of parental rights when a child has been in care 15 of the last 22 months. This law was enacted to speed up the adoption process and reduce the time children stay in foster care.

SELECTING THE RIGHT ADOPTION AGENCY

Ideally, the adoption process should provide a rich and meaningful experience for the prospective family and their chosen child. When prospective parents and their social worker form a close working relationship, the chances for a successful adoption are greatly increased. A competent, conscientious adoption agency will therefore take responsibility for guiding the prospective family and the child they have chosen through all the phases of the adoption process.

Because foster parents have priority over other prospective parents in adopting their foster children, many people feel that the fastest route to adoption is to become a child's foster parent. This, however, carries the risk that, in the long run, the child may not become legally free. Adoption agencies differ. Some agencies are willing to place a child whose birth parents have not had their parental rights terminated. This involves the prospective adoptive parents in a legal risk adoption.

Most foster children who do not return to their birth families and who are freed for adoption, are eventually adopted by their foster parents. Even when the foster parents have signed a waiver, saying they don't intend to adopt, they may change their minds - especially when confronted with the prospect of the child leaving their home. The foster parents still have priority when a child has been in their home for one year or longer.

It is important for prospective adoptive parents to make clear to the adoption agency that their intention is to **adopt** a child, not simply to become foster parents; unless, of course, they understand and voluntarily assume the risk that the child may leave their home.

Questions prospective adoptive parents will want to ask about an agency include:

- Does the agency provide ongoing training and support for prospective adoptive parents?
- What costs and expenses should the prospective parents anticipate?
- What is the agency's success rate in the placement of children?
- What is the usual waiting period before a child is placed with a prospective family?
- How long after a successful placement will the agency recommend finalization?
- What post-adoptive services are available?

Today, there is no central service that evaluates all adoption agencies. Word of mouth from families who have adopted or from adoption support groups remains the chief source of information for parents who are interested in comparing adoption agencies. Nevertheless, it is usually possible to ask whatever government entity oversees adoption to verify the reputation of an adoption agency. In New York City this is the Administration for Children's Services; in New York State it is the Office of Children and Family Services. The Better Business Bureau will also provide information as to whether any complaints have been filed against a particular agency.

Through the years, COAC has developed strong professional links with numerous adoption placement agencies, and is specially qualified to refer families.

The achievements of COAC are most clearly demonstrated by the high rate of success among COAC-counseled adoptions: over 90% of these placements are successful.

THE ADOPTION PROCESS

COAC's Orientation sessions provide an introduction to the adoption process and a general overview of procedures for prospective adoption parents. During an Orientation session, the six steps of COAC's adoption process are reviewed, information and resource books featuring children available for adoption are presented, and prospective parents are encouraged to ask whatever questions they may have. An application form is given to persons who want to continue in the adoption process.

Following are the steps of COAC's adoption process and an outline of the procedures:

STEPS IN COAC'S ADOPTION PROCESS

1. Personal Interview
2. The Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP) Training
3. Certified Home Study
4. Selection of Child
5. Referral to Adoption Agency
6. Post Adoption Services

COAC'S ADOPTION PROCESS PHASES

- 1. Pre-Placement Phase**
 - a. Personal Interview
 - b. MAPP Training
 - c. Homestudy
 - d. Clearance by New York State Central Register (SCR) and Fingerprinting
 - e. Certification
 - f. Child Selection and Review of Child's Psycho-Social History
 - g. Referral to Adoption Agency
- 2. Post Placement Phase**
 - a. Support Groups
 - b. Crisis Intervention
 - c. Information and Referral Services

THE ADOPTION AGENCY'S PROCESS

- 1. Pre-placement Phase**
 - a. Pre-placement visits: Child and family meet and get acquainted
- 2. Placement**

- a. Placement of child
- b. Adoptive Placement Agreement (APA)
- c. Supervision and monitoring of family
- d. Application for Adoption Subsidy
- e. Forming a Family Unit

3. Post-Placement Phase: Planning for Finalization of Adoption

- a. Selecting an attorney
- b. Assembling the necessary documents

4. Finalization

- a. Filing Petition for Finalization
- b. Appearance in court
- c. Order of Adoption

POST ADOPTION SERVICES

- 1. COAC'S Post-Adoption Services**
- 2. Adoption Agency's Services**

COAC'S PRE-PLACEMENT PHASE

The Personal Interview

After a prospective adoptive family's application is received, COAC's Family Coordinator conducts a home visit and personal interview. The personal interview is an opportunity to share information, to determine that a family is ready to adopt, to establish their preferences for the kind of child they want to adopt, and to make sure that their expectations are compatible with the requirements of that type of child. The interview may last anywhere from an hour to two. The prospective parents will be asked for information about their marital status, religion, employment, educational background, and that of other family and household members. The Family Coordinator will encourage them to ask questions, and help them to examine their own feelings and expectations about adoption, and to express freely any concerns they might have.

Clearance by the New York State Central Register and Fingerprinting

New York State law requires that everyone in the household of the pre-adoptive family over the age of 18 must be screened by the New York State Central Register (SCR). The SCR is maintained by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services in Albany. It keeps records on individuals who were found to have abused or maltreated a child for whom they were legally responsible. The child's placement in the prospective adoptive home is not permitted until clearance is granted. If any family member is listed in the SCR for having abused or

maltreated a child, the court will ask the agency to present the evidence that the child will be safe in the home.

New York State law also requires that household members over the age of 18 be fingerprinted. COAC will arrange the fingerprinting process.

The Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting (MAPP) Trainings

The required MAPP trainings help COAC staff and prospective adoptive parents to work together effectively as a team prior to and during the placement of a child. The trainings enable the prospective parents to understand children who may have a broad range of special needs and to make informed decisions about their capacity to adopt. They enable the parents to assess their rationales for adopting, as well as, express their concerns. The trainings cover such issues as: how to help children deal with feelings of loss and separation; challenging behavioral patterns; how to parent children who have been sexually and/or physically abused and neglected. Parents are required to attend thirty hours of MAPP training.

The Homestudy

The homestudy is a written document describing the family's background, functioning, resources and capacity to adopt a child. It is used to certify that the family has met all the requirements necessary to board children in their home. It is conducted by means of one or more home visits by the homefinder, a professional social worker, who conducts interviews with the prospective adoptive parents and any other members of the household.

The homestudy includes:

- Accessibility and availability of basic services such as: health care, recreation, schools, shopping, transportation
- Adequacy of the home: space, physical condition, special features for a handicapped child.
- Attitudes of parents and children, such as: parents' motivations for wanting to adopt and for parenting; parents' attitudes about discipline; children's attitudes (where other children are in the home) toward parent-child relationships, including their feelings about the arrival of a new family member; quality of parent-child relationships
- Availability of a *Back-up Person*: whether there is someone to care for the child in the event the parents are unable to do so.
- Characteristics of the child the family is looking for: preferences regarding age, disabilities, ethnic background, gender, siblings.

- Coping mechanisms:
how the family deals with change and crises; how parents expect to deal with the needs of the chosen child.
- Educational background:
parents' education; school reports of children in family who attend school
- Employment history of prospective parents
- Family and social relationships
- Financial information:
amount of income, source of income, and other resources
- Health and Illness:
any medical or physical conditions of parents that might affect their ability to care for the chosen child; medical status of other members of the household
- Lifestyle:
leisure-time activities, friends and interests
- Marital history of prospective parents

Prospective parents who have asked for a special needs child are entitled to have their home-study begun within 30 days of the date a completed application has been received by COAC.

The Family Coordinator may make several home visits over time to make sure that the prospective parents are prepared to assume responsibility for the child they have chosen.

Prospective parents are entitled to review a summary of their homestudy, and request changes if they feel it contains misinformation. If a family's home is rejected as a result of the homestudy, they will be advised in writing by COAC about the procedures that exist for challenging the rejection. The family is entitled to a fair hearing by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

A homestudy is generally valid for a year in New York State. If the adoption process takes longer, the homestudy will need to be updated and the home recertified annually.

Documents will be required to verify certain information.

Information

Required Documents

Proof of age

Birth certificates

Marital status	Marriage (separation/divorce or death) certificates where applicable
Citizenship (or legal residency for non-citizens)	Birth certificate, Naturalization Certificate, or “green card”
Income	Employment pay stub, W-2 form, copy of tax return, documentation of benefits
Health of family members	Medical reports
Living expenses	Lease or mortgage; mortgage or rent payment receipt; utility bills
Character references	Four letters from people (non-relatives) who know the prospective parents well
Educational progress	School reports
Child abuse and criminal record check	SCR Clearance and Fingerprinting

It is important to make copies of all personal documents.

Certification

When the homestudy, fingerprinting and clearance from the SCR are completed, the family will be certified by COAC as qualified to board children in their home. Each family is assigned a *vendor i.d. number* by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. A family may be certified with only one agency at a time.

Families who express a willingness to adopt a handicapped or hard-to-place child are listed with the New York State Parent Registry. Agencies seeking families for children use the Registry.

Referral to an Adoption Agency

After a family has been certified, COAC's Family Coordinator will send a report of inquiry and a summary of the homestudy to the authorized agency that has the child the family has chosen. The agency should respond in writing within ten days regarding the inquiry and the child's status. If a family has not identified a specific child, a summary of their homestudy will be sent to three or more agencies to find a child that meets the family's preference.

When the child's agency and COAC agree to proceed in the placement process, the child's psycho-social history will be provided to COAC. This is a report that provides a detailed summary of the child's physical and emotional development. It describes the child's family composition, ethnicity, age, gender, medical and mental health history. It should also include the circumstances that may have contributed to the child's being placed in foster care and being placed for adoption. It will not disclose information that will identify the child's birth family. Reviewing the Psycho-Social History with the Family Coordinator will help the family to be sure they are really interested in the child and if so, to have realistic expectations that will make them better able to meet the child's needs.

The Family Coordinator will arrange a meeting attended by the prospective adoptive family, the Coordinator, the child's agency adoption worker and other persons relevant for the placement. The meeting will provide an opportunity for everyone to exchange information, and to familiarize the family with the child's history. The meeting also provides the family with an opportunity to ask questions about the child.

Questions about the child might include:

Is the child legally free?

What circumstances placed the child in foster care and for adoption?

How long has the child been in foster care?

How many times has the child been moved since birth?

Does the child have a terminal illness?

Does the child have siblings? If so, are they available for adoption?

During this Initial Meeting, the prospective adoptive parents should emphasize their intention to adopt the child, not simply to become the child's foster parents. They should also inquire about the child's recent experience in the foster care system, including information about the foster care families with whom the child has lived.

If the child has a disability, the prognosis regarding the disability is important; it will help the family be more realistic in their expectations both for the child and for themselves, in anticipating the support that will be needed when the child comes into their home. Many severely handicapped children are capable of receiving education that can help them develop to their full potential.

THE ADOPTION AGENCY'S PROCESS

Pre-Placement visits: child and family meet and get acquainted

The first meeting between the child and the prospective family is a momentous occasion for both. Usually, the meeting is arranged by the child's social worker, and takes place at the agency that has the child. It generally lasts about an hour. Before the meeting, prospective parents need to think about how they plan to communicate with the child - especially if the child is very young or handicapped. The adoption worker should be able to suggest what the prospective parents might bring along, such as a toy or game appropriate to the child's age or stage of development. COAC's Family Coordinator will accompany the parents to the meeting.

If the first visit goes well, other visits will be arranged, gradually increasing in length of time. The prospective parents will "graduate" from visits supervised by the social worker to unsupervised visits. At some point, the visit will take place at home - at first for a short time, later working up to an overnight and a weekend. For these visits, the parents are on their own. It is important for them to share with the Family Coordinator both the positive and negative experiences that occur during the visits. The parents should write down any questions or concerns they may have about the child and the way the child fits into their family life. This will allow the Family Coordinator to provide any necessary pre-adoption counseling or resources.

Weekend visits generally continue for four to six weeks, depending on the child's agency policy. This period should be used by the family as a valuable opportunity to rehearse in detail just what life will be like when the child comes to live permanently in the home. Discussion among family members should be encouraged, and everyone's concerns should be addressed. This is also the time to determine what kind of assistance the family will need in order to care for the child and to ask for whatever support services are necessary. The adoption agency's staff will help the family to understand the child's rights in regard to adoption subsidy.

At the end of this time, if all has gone well, the child will be placed in the home. The adoption agency's staff will continue to visit the family and to monitor the progress of the parent-child relationship during the adoptive placement period, until the adoption is finalized in court.

Placement

Placement is the time when a child begins to live with his prospective adoptive family, before the adoption is finalized. This period usually lasts between six and twelve months. At the time of placement, the parents will receive the following information:

- Nationality, race and ethnicity of the birth parents
- Child's medical history, including immunization record, and medication dispensed to the child before placement
- Any follow-up treatment given or still needed
- Any known hereditary diseases or conditions of birth parents and the child
- Drugs or medication taken by the birth mother during pregnancy
- Results of developmental or psychological tests administered to the child before placement
- Results of sight and hearing tests
- An educational assessment if one has been made
- Any other information which might have an influence on the child's future

Adoptive Placement Agreement (APA)

At the time of the child's placement, the family will receive an Adoptive Placement Agreement. This is a document signed by the prospective adoptive parents and by the adoption agency's staff that spells out the rights and responsibilities of both parties. It affirms the willingness of the family to adopt the child and the agency's agreement to carry out its duties concerning the child's welfare.

Supervision and Monitoring of Family by Agency

New York State law requires an adoption agency to provide ongoing supervision and monitoring of a child during the pre-adoptive placement. The adoption agency's staff will visit with the child and family on a monthly basis, and may ask to have the child brought to the office for appointments. New York City's Administration for Children's Services is legally responsible for all children in foster care and adoption placement until the adoption is finalized.

Application for an Adoption Subsidy

An Adoption Subsidy is a monthly stipend made to adoptive parents to provide for the needs of a child who is considered handicapped or hard to place.

A handicapped child is one who has a physical, mental, or emotional condition or disability that would make it difficult for the child to be adopted.

A hard to place child is one who has been waiting to be adopted for six months or more and has not found an adoptive family, or who is considered difficult to adopt because of other factors, such as age, or being part of a sibling group to be adopted together.

There are two types of adoption subsidies: Maintenance and Medical. Both are usually available until a child reaches the age of 18, or 21 if the child remains in school. A Maintenance subsidy covers the expenses for the general care and support of the adopted child. A Medical subsidy covers the expenses of special medical care, including the purchase of durable medical goods, usually through Medicaid.

Eligibility for subsidies is based on the child's circumstances only, not on the parents' income. Parents should be sure to clarify the terms of the subsidy their child is entitled to. Because the laws are subject to change, it is important to discuss the child's eligibility thoroughly.

An Adoption Subsidy Agreement is a legally binding document signed by the adoptive parents and the local social services agency that spells out the specific terms of the subsidy. It must be approved by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

Sometimes medical problems that were not fully recognized at the time of placement become apparent later, requiring lengthy and costly treatment. If it turns out that a child who was adopted without an adoption subsidy later needs such treatment, the parents are entitled to apply for both Maintenance and Medical subsidies. They will need to show that they first became aware of the child's condition after the adoption, and they will need a certificate from a doctor stating that the condition or disability existed before the adoption.

Forming a Family Unit

Getting ready to welcome a new child into the family is an exciting time, and the whole family should be encouraged to participate. If there are other children in the family, parents should use words like "*your new sister*" (or brother) when speaking of the newest family member. When speaking to the new child in the family, they should refer to "*your new bedroom*" or "*our family kitchen*". A child with physical disabilities may need to have some changes made in the home, such as a wheelchair ramp. Decorating the newcomer's room with cheerful bedding, and helping to select toys or games appropriate to the child's age and stage of development are activities in which everyone can take part. The new family member may need some new clothing; if he's old enough and able to participate, it's a good idea to let the child help choose (within reason!) things he prefers. But it is also important to let other children in the family know that they are very special, too, and to save time and attention to devote to their needs, not just those of the newcomer.

The arrival of a sibling, adopted or otherwise, while a happy time, can also be stressful. Sometimes it causes children to revert to behaviors they had outgrown. If this happens, it is

important to remember that the situation is temporary, and that the parents' understanding and patience will make everything return to normal faster.

The need to belong to a family is a deep and fundamental one; children need to feel a sense of belonging. But in order to become a member of *your* family, your child needs to come to terms with the separation from the people and places (both good and bad) that have been familiar to him up to now. Adoptive parents must recognize that many special needs children have been traumatized by their experiences; some have faced physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. Adoptive families should not underestimate the effects of this trauma. It is normal for a child to go through a period of grief or mourning due to the loss of important people in his life. Adoptive parents must be prepared to help their child through this period. Children need to be helped to talk over their feelings about past separations and significant people in their lives. Activities that contribute to a child's positive self-image and cultural identity should be emphasized. To help them maintain their sense of identity, older children should be allowed to retain some links with their past. This might include staying in touch with people from their earlier life (such as relatives or friends) as well as keeping possessions that are important to them such as pictures, clothing, or toys.

Of course, new adoptive parents are eager for their child to become a full-fledged member of their family. This is a two-way process. While the family maintains its routines so the child can get accustomed to its lifestyle, the child's favorite foods, games, or hobbies should be incorporated into the family's routines. If the child's capabilities permit giving him responsibilities for carrying out simple household tasks, it is a good idea to do so. Children like to feel that they are contributing something useful to their family. Parents might want to take a new family photo with the newest child, display it prominently, and put a copy in the family album. Some families develop new rituals, such as celebrating the anniversary of "Finalization Day".

Parents will also be eager to introduce their newest child to their friends, neighbors, and other members of the family. It is important, however, to remember that a child needs time to adjust to the family's rules and expectations.

Some children take longer than others to establish emotional bonds. If a child seems unable to bond with adoptive parents after what seems to them a reasonable period, it may be a good idea to ask for professional help.

The Post-Placement Phase: Planning for Finalization

The parents should use the post-placement period to make sure of their child's needs and entitlements. Although they will have discussed the Adoption Subsidy prior to placement, this is another opportunity to make sure that the right type and level of support services will be provided. These services may include physical therapy, homemaker service, recreational activities, speech therapy, transportation, tutorial help, medical follow-up (including mental health care), educational help, and counseling.

Selecting an attorney

Because adoption is a legal matter, prospective adoptive parents must hire a lawyer to represent them in the finalization of the adoption. Although the family is free to retain a lawyer of their choosing, the adoption agency's staff or COAC will recommend experienced adoption lawyers.

Assembling the necessary documents

The agency's lawyer will be in charge of assembling the necessary documents (called the *adoption packet*) which the social worker and the prospective parents will have provided.

Parents will also need to get their new child his own Social Security number so they can claim him as a deduction on their federal income tax return, and qualify for an Adoption Tax Credit.

Children with physical or mental handicaps are entitled to receive free and appropriate education, and to be educated in the "least restrictive environment". If a child has not already been tested, this is the time for parents to ask for a series of tests including an educational assessment, a psychological profile, sight and hearing tests, and any other tests the testing specialist recommends. Interacting with the general school population helps to develop a child's social skills: a special or separate classroom should be considered only when placement in a regular class is not appropriate.

Every handicapped child must have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP, which should be reviewed at regular intervals, typically includes an assessment of the child's strengths and weaknesses, annual and short-term educational goals, the methods that will be used to achieve the goals, and an explanation of the evaluation procedure. For current information on available educational programs for handicapped or disabled children, it is wise to call the local Board of Education.

WHAT IF THINGS DON'T WORK OUT?

Sometimes, with all the good intentions in the world, it is not possible to establish the kind of relationship necessary for a successful adoption. This is not the kind of decision that is usually made all at once. Rather, it becomes clear over a period of time that matters are not proceeding as they should. When this occurs, the adoption agency's staff should be consulted as soon as possible. Sometimes the problem can be helped by counseling, sometimes not. In either case, the situation is a painful one for all concerned. The prospective parents and the child may feel

guilty for not being able to maintain the relationship. When the parents realize that the situation is one they cannot handle, their best course of action is to admit it, and ask for professional help. If it is finally determined that the relationship cannot be rescued, the adoption process is stopped. This is known as *disruption* of the adoption.

If the child is able to understand, the parents should be honest about explaining why they feel they need to disrupt the adoption, without assigning blame to anyone. They should provide the child with the opportunity to express his feelings as well, and find out whether the child would like to remain in contact with them.

When the disruption is inevitable, parents should ask for a *Post Disruption Review Conference*. At this conference, professionals can help both child and parents to express their feelings and deal with their emotions. This will help everyone to recover from this traumatic episode, and can provide a learning experience that will be valuable to everyone concerned.

FINALIZATION

Finalization is the legal act by a judge in a court of law that consummates an adoption. Finalization creates a new legal relationship between a child and the child's parents. No longer are they "prospective adoptive" parents, but simply parents, with all of the joys and responsibilities that parenthood involves.

But finalization is much more than a legal term. It represents the official recognition of an emotional commitment that the parents have made to their child. From now on, in the words of one adopted 3-year old, they are "finally a family forever". As a major milestone, finalization is a solemn occasion, as well as an occasion for rejoicing.

If all has gone well during the preceding six to twelve months that comprised the post-placement period, parents and child will have established deep, permanent bonds, or certainly will have demonstrated the capacity and the willingness to do so. Their relationship will have been observed by the adoption agency's staff, who will have incorporated the observations into a report that will be submitted to the court along with the other necessary documents.

REMEMBER: IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO MAKE COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS

While most adoption hearings are basically similar in the types of information they require, judges have the freedom to ask for additional information as they see fit, to determine whether the adoption will be in the child's best interests. In New York State, children over the age of 14 must consent to their adoption.

In general, the information required by the court includes the following:

- The homestudy
- Documents relating to the family members' marital status:
Certified marriage certificates, divorce decrees, decrees or agreements of separation, death certificates, a sworn statement (called an affidavit) that a parent is legally married but has been living apart from his or her spouse for three years before beginning the finalization process.
- The family's State Central Register clearance report, and results of fingerprinting.
The judge will want to know whether anyone in the household has abused or neglected a child, whether anyone in the household has a criminal record, and whether any child in the home is having problems with the law.

Remember: If you have been arrested or convicted of a crime, you will not necessarily be denied the right to adopt, but it is important to be truthful.

- Approved Subsidy applications

A recent doctor's report on the parents' health is required. Some judges will want a medical report on all members of the household.

A judge will sometimes require adoptive parents to identify a "legal back-up" person who would be responsible for the child's care in the event that the parents become incapacitated. This is more likely to happen when parents are over the age of 55.

Filing a Petition for Adoption

When the lawyer has assembled the Adoption Packet, a Petition for Adoption is filed with the Adoption Clerk of the Family or Surrogate's Court. The Adoption Clerk is the person who reviews the adoption packet to make sure that all the necessary documents have been submitted so that the packet may be given to the judge. The adoption packet will then receive a docket number, indicating that the case has been officially filed.

Until finalization is complete, the child's adoption agency's still has responsibility for the child's welfare, and their adoption staff will follow the case through the court and be available for assistance. Parents are entitled to find out about the progress of the adoption proceedings, and may call their attorney, or the Adoption Clerk of the court to get that information.

Appearance in Court

When the judge has made a favorable decision to grant the adoption, a date will be scheduled for the family to appear in court. The adoptive parents, the child, the adoption agency's staff and the family's lawyer usually attend the finalization. Other significant persons may be invited to share

in the joy when the family receives the Order of Adoption.

Order of Adoption

This document is issued by the Adoption Clerk. It removes custody from the authorities and transfers it to the parents. It gives the new name of the child, if the name has been changed, the date and place of the child's birth, the names of the adoptive parents, and the court where the adoption was granted. A new Birth Certificate will be issued for the child by the Department of Health. All papers pertaining to the adoption will be kept under seal by the court. Not even the adoptive parents may see these papers without the judge's permission.

POST ADOPTION SERVICES

Even though the adoption is now finalized, this does not mean that the new family is left alone to deal with any questions or problems that may arise without outside help. Although parents and child have been living together for some time, learning to live together is an ongoing process. All families have their ups and downs. The need for support is felt to some degree by all new parents, adoptive and otherwise. The need may be even stronger for parents of special needs children. Many parents find it helpful to continue to exchange information with others as their children reach different stages of development.

COAC'S Post-Adoption Services

COAC provides adoptive parents with a variety of post-adoptive services, that include, but are not limited to, individual and family counseling, the Warm Line (telephone crisis counseling), support groups, and referrals for clinical and consultative services for the purpose of ensuring permanence of the adoption. COAC serves as the lead agency for the New York City Adoption Resource Center (NYCARC), a regional network of agencies providing comprehensive post-adoption services.

COAC's NYCARC program provides direct services and also helps pre-and post-adoptive parents and children access community resources that support and sustain the adoptive family unit. COAC's Parent Support Groups provide an opportunity for parents to learn to cope with such issues as handling separation and loss, telling their child about his adoption, dealing with adolescent rebellion, problems of discipline, a child's search for birth parents, siblings, and the like. COAC's Adolescent Support Groups provide a forum for adopted youth to share and discuss their experiences and concerns on like issues from their own perspective. Parent - Child Support Groups provide a unique opportunity for parents and adopted children together to share their views on sensitive adoption-related issues in a safe, neutral setting.

Any adoptive family in the greater metropolitan New York region may avail itself of COAC's post-adoption services, regardless of where and when they adopted. COAC will provide

families with direct services and/or referrals to appropriate service providers in the community, depending on their needs.

Agency Post-Adoption Services

Families who have adopted from a foster care/adoption agency in New York City are entitled to 50 hours of post-adoption counseling from the child's agency during the three years following the finalization of the adoption. Services are designed to prevent or address problems that may develop after the date of the adoption decree and can be extended for three years from the date of assigned adoption decree. The child's agency may provide direct services or refer the family to an appropriate resource for needed services.

Many resources are available to parents of children with special needs. Special recreational services, respite services, camping services, and educational services are among them.

FINALLY A FAMILY

For a child to find a permanent, loving home for the very first time is like having a dream come true. Children with special needs are very special children. Raising them can be challenging, but also very rewarding. With patience and flexibility, and the willingness to seek and accept help when necessary, parents enormously increase their ability to cope with the stresses of raising children. For it is the living, coping and loving day by day that enable parents and children to become finally a family.

APPENDIX I: PARENTAL CHARACTERISTICS PREDICTING SUCCESS IN WAITING CHILD ADOPTION

Reprinted with permission from Colorado Parents for All Children, Boulder, Co.

If considering the adoption of a waiting child, here are some characteristics that seem to predict success.

- You like children and enjoy the challenges of raising a family. If you are not a parent already, you have had experiences with children through your own extended family, teaching, or other volunteer activities that have given you insight into the daily realities of parenting.
- You are a flexible person who can usually deal patiently with frustration and are open to changes in your expectations and lifestyle. You try to keep lines of communication open in your family and have a strong tolerance for ambivalence and negative feelings.
- You are able to see what people can accomplish, rather than just their limitations, and value them for their individual abilities and contributions. Your goals for your child are based on the realities of his potential and interests. You expect and see progress in little steps.
- You can postpone gratification and are able to make a strong commitment to a child who may not give much back in love, affection, or appreciation for months or even years.
- You have had contact with people who are parenting children with special needs.
- You are flexible and see family roles as flexible.
- You have a sense of humor, especially in times of stress.
- You are good at taking care of yourself - through friends, family parent groups, use of respite care for a child and by maintaining your own interest.
- You expect and make use of adoption assistance and are able to seek the help of others, including professionals, in parenting your child with special needs. You are a strong advocate for your child and can tolerate being seen as a bit of a trouble-maker as you assert yourself to get your child's needs met.

GLOSSARY

ADOPTION

An adoption is a legal arrangement that enables the adoptive parent and the adoptive child to have the same rights and responsibilities as those afforded to birth families. It is designed to meet the physical and emotional needs of a child by legally transferring ongoing parental responsibilities for the child from birth parents to adoptive parents.

ADOPTION SUBSIDY

An adoption subsidy is a monthly payment made to adoptive parents for the support of a child considered handicapped or hard to place. Adoptive parents should apply for the subsidy at the time the child is placed in their home.

ADOPTION SUBSIDY AGREEMENT

An Adoption Subsidy Agreement is a legal document that specifies the terms and conditions for which a subsidy is provided. It is dated and signed by the adoptive parents and New York State's social service officials.

ADOPTIVE PLACEMENT AGREEMENT (APA)

An Adoptive Placement Agreement is a document that specifies the rights and responsibilities of both the prospective adoptive family and the placement agency. It affirms the willingness of the family to adopt the child. It is signed by the prospective adoptive parents and agency officials.

CERTIFICATION

Certification is the culmination of the adoption agency's process for documenting that a family has met all the requirements necessary to board children in their home. Once the family is certified, it is assigned a "vendor i.d." number, which identifies the home as one approved to board children.

CERTIFIED HOME STUDY

A certified home study is COAC's written assessment and supporting documents describing a family's characteristics and capacity to adopt. It is sent to the adoption agency that has the child selected by the family and to the Family Court as a part of the required documents for adoption.

DISRUPTION

Adoption Disruption is the term used when plans for the adoption of a child are terminated by the prospective adoptive family after placement and prior to the finalization of an adoption.

FAMILY COORDINATORS

Family Coordinators are members of COAC's professional staff responsible for assisting

families through all phases of the adoption process.

FINALIZATION

Finalization is the granting by the court of total legal and parental responsibility for a child(ren) to the adoptive parents.

FOSTER CARE

Foster Care is a child welfare social service program which provides temporary parenting and placement of children outside of their birth parent's home.

HANDICAPPED

A handicapped child is one who has a physical, mental, or emotional condition or disability so severe that it could be an obstacle to the child's adoption.

HARD TO PLACE

A hard to place child is a child who is not handicapped but who is difficult to place because of his/her long wait in foster care, or because he/she is an older child, a member of a minority group considered over-represented in the foster care system, or one of a sibling group which needs to be placed together.

LEGALLY FREE

A child is legally free when the rights of the birth parents have been terminated either by court order or by a voluntary surrender agreement.

LEGAL RISK ADOPTIONS

A Legal Risk Adoption is the placement of a child who is not yet legally free with prospective adoptive parents.

NEW YORK CITY ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES (ACS)

New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) is the public agency responsible for providing New York City's child welfare services. ACS services include child protection, foster care, adoptive placement, family preservation programs and monitoring of child welfare agencies.

NEW YORK CITY'S FAMILY ALBUM

New York City's Family Album is a resource book published by New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS), which features photos and brief biographies of children in the city's foster care system awaiting adoption.

NEW YORK STATE’S ADOPTION ALBUM “OUR CHILDREN OUR FAMILIES”

New York State’s Adoption Album features photos and brief biographies of children in the state in need of adoptive families.

NEW YORK STATE CENTRAL REGISTER OF CHILD ABUSE AND MALTREATMENT (SCR)

The State Central Register (SCR) is a Register maintained in Albany, New York that keeps records of individuals who were found to have abused or maltreated a child for whom they were legally responsible. Everyone living in a prospective adoptive home who is over the age of 18 must be screened by the SCR as part of the adoption process. A child’s placement in a prospective adoptive family’s home is not permitted until a clearance is granted. If any family member is listed in the SCR for having abused or maltreated a child, the court will ask the agency to present evidence that the child will be safe in the home.

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services is the public agency responsible for providing and monitoring child welfare services throughout the State of New York.

ORDER OF ADOPTION

An Order of Adoption is a court decree granting total legal and custodial responsibility for a child(ren) to the adoptive parents.

PLACEMENT

Placement is the period when a child is allowed to live with his prospective adoptive family before the adoption is finalized. This period usually lasts between six and twelve months.

POST ADOPTION SERVICES

Post adoption services are programs that assist adoptive parents and children to make use of resources which support and sustain their family unit.

POST-DISRUPTION REVIEW CONFERENCE

A post disruption review conference is a session held to review the factors involved in an adoption disruption, to help the prospective adoptive parents and child express their feelings, deal with their emotions, and learn from the experience.

PSYCHO-SOCIAL HISTORY

A Psycho-Social History provides a detailed summary of a child(ren)’s physical and emotional

development. Included are events or circumstances which may have contributed to the child(ren)'s placement in foster care or for adoption, family composition, ethnicity, age, sex, medical and mental health history. A Psycho-Social History will not disclose names or information that would identify the child(ren)'s birth family.

SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Special needs children are children who are considered difficult to place usually because of their age, a physical, mental or emotional handicap, or a prolonged stay in foster care after being freed for adoption; or because they belong to a minority group over-represented in the foster care system, or belong to a sibling group that needs to be placed together.

SURRENDER

Surrender is a legal process by which a child's parent or legal guardian voluntarily gives up all legal rights and responsibilities to a child.

TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

Termination of Parental Rights is a judicial decision which terminates a parent's legal rights to a child.

SUGGESTED READING

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RESOURCES

Post Adoption Support Services

*New York Council On Adoptable Children
NYCARC
589 Eighth Avenue, 15th Floor
New York, New York 10018
(212) 475-0222
coac@erols.com*

*New Alternatives for Children
37 West 26th Street, 7th Floor
New York, New York 10010
(212) 696-1550*

*New York State Coalition for Children, Inc.
306 East State Street, # 220
Ithaca, New York 14850
(607) 272-0034*

*Adoptive Parents Committee Inc.
New York City Chapter
P.O. Box 3525 Church Street Station
New York, New York 10008-3525
(212) 304-8479
<http://www.wp.com/APC>*

*Resources for Children with Special Needs, Inc.
200 Park Avenue South, Room 816
New York, New York 10003
(212) 677-4650*

Education

*The Children's Advocacy Center of Manhattan
333 East 70th Street
New York, New York 10021
(212) 517-3012*

*Citizen's Committee for Children of New York, Inc.
105 East 22nd Street, 7th Floor
New York, New York 10010*

(212) 673-1800

*Public Education Association
39 West 32nd Street, 15th Floor
New York, New York 10001
(212) 868-1640*

*New York City Board of Education
110 Livingston Street
Brooklyn, New York 11201
Office of Parent Advocacy and Engagement
(718) 935-5202*

Recreation

*New York City Department of Parks and Recreation
800-201-7275*

*The Fresh Air Fund
(212) 221-0900*

*New York City Youth Line
800-246-4646*

Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies

*Child Care Inc.
275 Seventh Avenue, 15th Floor
New York, New York 10001
(212) 929-4999*

*New York City Agency for Child Development
(718) For Kids*

Health

*Growing Up Healthy Hotline
New York State Department of Health
800-522-5006
Families Together in New York State
888-326-8644 (FAM-TOGH)*

Mental Health Association of New York City, Inc.

(212) 254-0333

Help Line

(212) 532-2400

New York City's Department of Health Immunization Hotline

(212) 676-2273

Important Telephone Numbers

New York City's Administration for Children's Services

(877) 543-7692

Administration for Children's Services Legal Services

(212) 341-0931

Community Outreach Law Program

Association of the Bar of the City of New York

(212) 382-6629

New York City's Human Resources Administration Information Line

(718) 291-1900

New York Parents Connection Line

800-345-2437 or 800-345-5437

State of New York Office of Children and Family Services

Metropolitan Regional Office

(212) 383-1788

United Parents Associations of New York, Inc.

11 John Street

New York, New York 10038

(212) 406-7068

National Organizations

Child Welfare League of America

440 First Street N.W., 3rd Floor

*Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 638-2952*

*The National Adoption Center
1500 Walnut Street, Suite 701
Philadelphia, PA. 19102
(800) 862-3678*

*North American Council on Adoptable Children
970 Raymond Avenue, Suite 106
St. Paul, MN 55114-1149
(612) 644-3036
www.nacac.org*

*W.K Kellogg Foundation
Families for Kids
P.O. Box 550
Battle Creek, MI 49016-0550
www.wkkf.org*

Adoption Web Sites

*Adoption Information and Support
<http://www.adopting.org/>*

*Adoption.Com Internet Site
www.adoption.com*

*New York City Administration For Children's Services Adoption Website
www.nyc.gov/adopt meetourkids*

*New York Council On Adoptable Children
www.coac.org*

*Parents and Educators Resource Center
www.perc-schwabfdn.org/*

*The Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health
www.rtc.pdx.edu/*

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ERRATA

Please note the following changes to Finally a Family

- Page 8, paragraph 1, third sentence: Delete “However, in cases of domestic partners, only one partner may adopt.” Unmarried couples, of the same or opposite sex, may now adopt together.
- Page 23, paragraph 3, second sentence: “The agency should respond in writing within ten days...” should read as follows: “The agency should respond in writing within ten working days...”
- Page 38, line 2: “...and by maintaining your own interest.” should read “...and by maintaining your own interests.”

In addition, following are updated data for several of the Resources listed on pages 44 – 48. The updated or corrected information is underlined.

Page 44 - *Adoptive Parents Committee, Inc.*

Telephone number has been changed to (917) 432-0234

Website is now <http://www.adoptiveparents.org>

New York State Coalition For Children, Inc., should read
New York State Citizens’ Coalition For Children

Page 45 - *Resources for Children with Special Needs, Inc.*

new address: *116 East 16th Street, 5th Floor* [no other change to address]

New York City Board of Education, Office of Parent Advocacy and Engagement, is now
New York City Department of Education, Office of Parent Outreach

Public Education Association, new name and address:
Center for Educational Innovation - Public Education Association
28 West 44th Street, Suite 914
New York, New York 10036
(212) 868-1640

Page 46 - *New York City Agency for Child Development,* is now:

New York City Administration for Children’s Services, Agency for Child Development

Page 47 – *New York City Human Resources Administration, Information Line*

new telephone: *(718) 291-1900*

New York Parents Connection Line, telephone: *(800) 345-5437 ONLY*

United Parents Associations of New York City, Inc., new telephone : *(718) 742-1775*
North American Council on Adoptable Children, website is: www.nacac.org

Page 48 - Delete *W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Families for Kids:* program is ended.

Add to Adoption Websites : *The Collaboration to AdoptUSKids : www.adoptuskids.org*