

**March
2009**

Tuscarawas County Job & Family Services Post-Adoption Link Newsletter

EXPANDED ACCESS TO COLLEGE FINANCIAL AID

FOR ADOPTEES WHO WERE ADOPTED FROM FOSTER CARE AT ANY POINT AFTER THEIR 13TH BIRTHDAY

In 2008, the Fostering Adoption to Further Student Achievement Act became law as an amendment to the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (Public Law 110-84). This law revises the definition of an ***“Independent Student.”*** **Independent Students do not have to include** their parents' income in the calculations for determining their need for financial aid.

This expanded definition goes into effect for students who apply to college for the 2009-2010 school year.

Youth who meet this new definition will need to indicate their status as an independent student when they fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form for college financial aid.

If you have any questions about this, please call Gayle Hahn at 330-339-7791, Ext. 175.

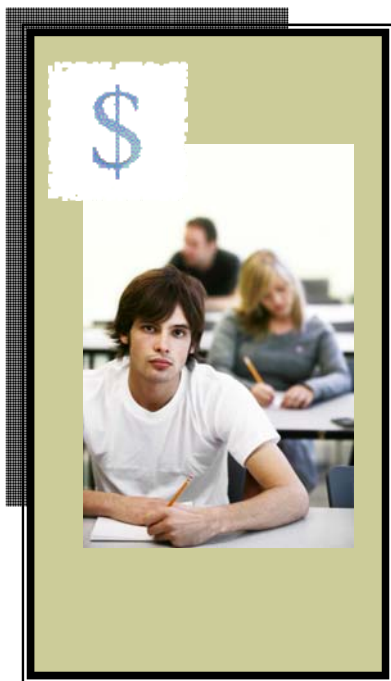
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PLEASE NOTE

You are now able to view or download
the TCJFS Post-Adoption Link Newsletter
at our agency's Website: www.tcjfs.org
Click on Adoption/Foster Care,
then on the top bar, Newsletters.

If you still want to receive a TCJFS Post-Adoption
Link Newsletter by mail, please call Dorothy at
330-339-7791, ext. 170.



Federal Adoption Tax Credit for Special Needs Adoptions that were just Finalized

Beginning in tax year 2003, families adopting a child with special needs from foster care could claim the adoption tax credit without needing to incur or document expenses. For tax year 2008, the tax credit is \$11,650 (and \$12,150 in 2009) per child and you have the year you finalized and up to the next five additional years in which to use it. If you finalized your adoption in earlier years and failed to claim the adoption tax credit, read the fact sheet *Amending Your Tax Return to Access the Federal Adoption Tax Credit* (almost complete) for more information.

The totals for the adoption tax credit and income restrictions found in this document are based on 2008 amounts. There will be a cost of living adjustment each year, so for tax years 2010 and beyond the numbers will change. There may be changes to the line numbers we list for the various forms too. Everything you need to know to claim the Federal Adoption Tax Credit is in this document.

Accessing the Tax Credit

How do I know if my child is considered to have special needs according to the IRS?

Children that are hard to place for adoption such as older children; minority children; sibling groups; and children with medical conditions, or physical, mental, and emotional handicaps often are determined to have special needs.

NACAC interprets the instructions for Form 8839 (the Adoption Tax Credit form) this way: If you receive adoption subsidy (assistance) for your child, the state that provides the subsidy has determined that your child has special needs. Your adoption subsidy agreement (or application and agreement) is the evidence that the state has determined your child to have special needs.

If your child does not receive an adoption subsidy, NACAC believes the state has not determined that your child has special needs and you will not be able to take the credit without documenting expenses for the cost of the adoption.

The instructions, found at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i8839.pdf> state:

Column (d)

A child is a child with special needs if all three of the following statements are true:

1. The child was a citizen or resident of the United States or its possessions at the time the adoption process began.
2. A state (including the District of Columbia) has determined that the child cannot or should not be returned to his or her parents' home.
3. The state has determined that the child will not be adopted unless assistance is provided to the adoptive parents. Factors used by states to make this determination include:
 - a. The child's ethnic background and age,
 - b. Whether the child is a member of a minority or sibling group, and
 - c. Whether the child has a medical condition or a physical, mental, or emotional handicap.

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You may be able to claim a credit or exclusion for the adoption of a child with special needs even if you did not have any qualified expenses. See line 24 and the instructions for line 5.

If you check the box in column (d), indicating the child has special needs, be sure to keep evidence of the state's determination in your records.

What will the Federal Adoption Tax Credit mean for our family?

While every family's taxes are different, we can provide information to help you figure out what the credit means for you. How much, if any of the credit you can use is based on: (1) your income (families with federal modified adjusted gross income above \$214,730 in 2008, or \$222,180 in 2009, cannot claim the credit at all); and (2) your total federal tax liability. In one year, you can use as much of the credit as the full amount of your federal income tax liability. The amount of your tax liability (line 46 of Form 1040) is based on your taxable income.

Many people believe the Federal Adoption Tax Credit won't help them because they get a refund every year, but that isn't necessarily true. A refund means you have paid more federal income tax than you needed to, so the IRS refunds the amount overpaid. The tax credit is applied against your total tax liability and could increase your refund. Here are some examples of how the tax credit might benefit your family.

- Family one is a couple who adopts a sibling group of two children with special needs. They had \$6,500 in federal income tax withheld from their paychecks, and their tax liability is \$7,000, which means they would owe \$500 in April. With the adoption tax credit, they have \$23,300 in credits, and this year they could use up to \$7,000 of the credit.* They get a refund of \$6,500, and will have at least \$16,300 of tax credit to carryover for up to five additional years.
- Family two is a single mother who adopts a sibling group of three children with special needs. She had \$5,000 in federal income tax withheld from her paychecks, but her tax liability is only \$4,000, which means she would receive a refund of \$1,000 in April. With the adoption tax credit, she has \$34,950 in adoption tax credits, and this year she could use \$4,000 of the credit.* She will get a refund this year of \$5,000, and can carry over \$30,950 of tax credit to carryover for up to five additional years.
- Family three is a couple with five other children who adopts a sibling group of two children with special needs. They had \$1,000 in federal income tax withheld from their paychecks, and their tax liability is \$0, which means they would receive a refund of \$1,000 in April. With the adoption tax credit, they have \$23,300 in credits. Since they have no tax liability, they are unable to use any of the possible \$23,300 adoption tax credit this year. They should still file the Form 8839 with their tax return because it will help establish the year the adoption was finalized. The credit would carry forward for five additional years and the family could use it when their tax liability is greater than zero in future years.

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Filling out Form 8839: Qualified Adoption Expenses

What do I do when the IRS asks for qualifying expenses on line 5?

The Instructions for Form 8839 are found at:
<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i8839.pdf> state:

Special needs adoption. If you adopted a child with special needs and the adoption became final in 2008, enter on line 5:

- \$11,650, minus any qualified adoption expenses you used to figure any adoption credit you claimed for the same child in a prior year. This is the amount you entered on line 3 of Form 8839 for this child.

If you did not claim any adoption credit for the child in a prior year, enter \$11,650 on line 5 even if your qualified adoption expenses for the child were less than \$11,650 (and even if you did not have any qualified adoption expenses for this child).

This means that you do NOT have to document qualified expenses to take the credit if your child is considered special needs or hard to place and receive adoption subsidy.

What if my tax liability is less than the adoption tax credit??

Then you will also need to fill out the Credit Carry Forward Worksheet in the Instructions for Form 8839. This documents the amount of the credit you can carry forward for up to five additional years or until it is used up, whichever is sooner. You do not need to submit this worksheet.

Claiming the Child Tax Credit

If you can claim your child as a dependent, then you should also look into how to claim the Child Tax Credit. In years that you are using the Adoption Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit, you will need to complete the worksheet in Publication 972, Child Tax Credit.

Note—if you checked Yes on line 13 of the worksheet you may be eligible to take the Additional Child Tax Credit. The Additional Child Tax Credit is a refundable tax credit, which means you may receive more money in a refund than you had federal income tax withheld (unlike the Adoption Tax Credit). To claim this credit, you will need to complete Form 8812, Additional Child Tax.

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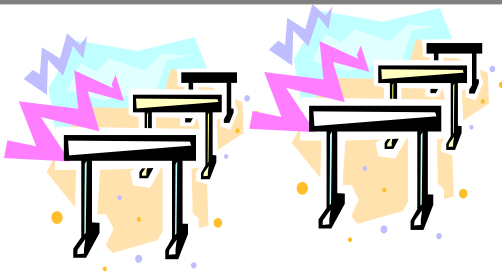
Additional Questions

Finally, if you receive adoption subsidy (assistance) for your child and have questions on whether it is taxable income or if you can claim that child as a dependent (and receive the child tax credit), you should read NACAC's fact sheet ***Tax Issues Related to Adoption Assistance and Adoption.***

If you have additional questions on the adoption tax credit, contact the North American Council on Adoptable Children at 651-644-3036 or adoption.assistance@nacac.org.

** The amount of the adoption tax credit may be reduced if you claim other credits such as the Education Credits or Retirement Savings Contribution Credit.*

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



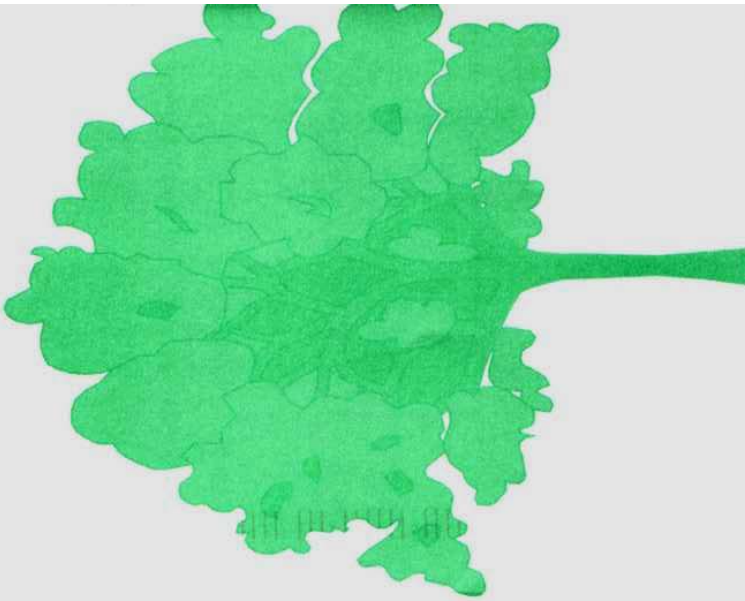
SIX HURDLES FOR ADOPTED TEENS

- **Difference:** “I’m not like most kids; my family is different.” “I don’t look like my family.” “I don’t share my family’s cultural or racial heritage.”
- **Reason for Adoption:** “Why was I given away? Was something wrong with me?” “My birth parents used drugs, abused, or neglected me. What does this mean about me?” “Why couldn’t my birth parents solve their problems and keep me?”
- **Missing Information:** “What do my birth parents look like?” “What’s my real birthday and why was I abandoned?” “My birth mother wasn’t sure who my birth father was.”
- **Identity:** “Am I more like my birth parents or my adoptive parents?” “How can I figure out who I am if I don’t know much about my birth parents?” “I don’t look like my family.”
- **Loyalty:** “I’ll upset my adoptive parents if I ask too many questions about my birth parents.” “Things were bad in my birth family, but I love my mom and my grandmother and might live with them again some day.” “I worry about my siblings who are in different placements.”
- **Permanence:** “If my birth parents gave me away, it could happen again.” “I’ve lived in so many foster homes, I’m sure I’ll be moved again.” “I’ll be 18 soon. Will my parents still be there for me after I leave home?”

Do you truly pay attention to what your teen is trying to say?

When teens really want to talk, parents should take time to really listen.

North American Council on Adoptable Children 35th Annual Conference Columbus, Ohio



Family Connections:

The Roots of Success



August 13-15, 2009
(pre-conference sessions: August 12)

Hyatt Regency Columbus

From August 12th to 15th, 2009, NACAC presents its 35th annual conference in Columbus, Ohio. The conference is open to adoptive, foster, and birth parents, kinship providers, child welfare professionals, adoptees, foster care alumni, and other child advocates.

Location and Accommodations

Located in the heart of Ohio, Columbus is a rapidly growing city rich in culture and history. Visitors can roam through the German Village or visit the spectacular Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. Columbus offers a variety of museums—from the Jack Nicklaus museum to the Wexler Center for the Arts—plus many family-friendly activities and restaurants.

Conference sessions will be held at the Hyatt Regency. NACAC has reserved guest rooms at the:

- ◆ Hyatt Regency Columbus — 614-463-1234/
800-233-1234
- ◆ Crowne Plaza Hotel Columbus Downtown —
614-461-4100/800-338-4462

Under NACAC's group rate, both hotels will charge \$139 per night plus 16.75 percent tax.

You may link to the hotels from www.nacac.org. Availability extends until all rooms fill or until July 21, 2009, whichever is first. Please make reservations early. Tell the hotel operator you are attending the NACAC conference, and ask about the hotel's guarantee, deposit, and cancellation policies.

NACAC is grateful for the support of the following groups:

- Adopt America Network • Adoption Circle •
- American Academy of Adoption Attorneys •
- Attachment & Bonding Center of Ohio •
- Bellefaire Jewish Children's Bureau •
- Buckeye Ranch Square One • Caring for Kids •
- Central Ohio Regional Training Center •
- Children's Defense Fund—Ohio •
- Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption •
- Franklin, Lucas, and Montgomery Counties •
- Institute for Human Services • Lumpe & Frost •
- Ohio Department of Jobs & Family Services •
- Ohio Family Care Association •
- Public Children's Services Association of Ohio

General Sessions

On Thursday, JJ Hirsch, Wendy Piccus, Maurice Webb, and Lisa Wilson will discuss their experiences with siblings in foster care. Some stayed together while others were painfully separated. After the panel, Utah Court of Appeals Judge William Thorne will highlight the need for policy and practice reforms.

On Friday, Regina Kupecky of the Attachment and Bonding Center of Ohio will present "The Importance of Family Connections."

During Saturday's luncheon, NACAC will present awards to individuals and organizations from around North America. The luncheon will be followed by an inspiring closing session with Jim Payne, director of the Indiana Department of Child Services.

Workshops & Institutes

NACAC's conference—with nearly 100 sessions presented by leaders in the adoption field—covers post-adoption services, recruitment, international adoption, parenting children with challenges, public policy, and more. Tentative sessions include:

- Making MEPA Work: Recruiting Where Children Live
- Surviving Adolescence: A Workshop for Parents Raising Challenging Teens
- Trauma and Attachment through the Lifespan
- Sexual Safety: A Prerequisite to Healing
- Helping Adoption Agencies Understand Medical Conditions of the Special Needs Child
- Legislative Advocacy: Making Your Voice Count
- Siblings in Foster Care and Adoption
- Engaging Youth in Permanency Conversations
- Respite Programs and Support Groups

The conference will feature acclaimed speakers including Joseph Crumbley, Denise Goodman, Gregory Keck, Brenda McCreight, Deena McMahon, Pat O'Brien, Dee Paddock, and Debbie Riley.

Special Interest Groups

Groups may hold evening meetings open to all conference attendees or for a specified audience. To sponsor an event, contact NACAC. Space is limited.

Exhibit Space

Tabletop displays will be available during the conference near the general sessions, many workshops, and refreshment breaks. Space is limited, so please contact NACAC for an application right away.

Pre-Conference Sessions

NACAC will hold two pre-conference sessions from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on August 12. Fees are \$110 US/\$130 CDN per person and are not included in regular conference registration fees.

- **Adoption Competency for Mental Health Practitioners** — There is a need for adoption-competent mental health professionals who can see beyond diagnoses. Learn about adoption-competent models, approaches, and strategies that really work for adoptive/foster families. *Diane Martin-Hushman & Kim Stevens, North American Council on Adoptable Children • Gregory Keck, Attachment and Bonding Center of Ohio • Deena McMahon, McMahon Counseling & Consultation Services*

- **Managing Challenging Behaviors: A Survival Guide for Parents and Professionals** — Participants will learn about the impact of trauma and loss on children's brains and the behavioral challenges—defiance, aggression, lying, impulsiveness, and sexualized behaviors—that can result. Attendees will learn new approaches for teaching cognitive skills and new ways to manage children's explosive, non-compliant, and risky behaviors. *Dee Paddock, Families with a Difference, Iowa*

Children's & Teen Programs

The 2009 children's program—for children 1 to 12—will be held at the Hyatt. Younger children will be in educational day care at the hotel while older children participate in activities and area tours. The program runs Thursday and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

If you can't attend in 2009, join us in Hartford, Connecticut, August 4-7, 2010.

In the teen program, youth 13 to 17 will learn, share, and have fun together. The program—held Thursday to Saturday—will include educational sessions and field trips.

Space is limited in both programs so please register as soon as registration forms are available in the spring.

Academic Accreditation

We offer, for a fee, continuing education units (CEUs) for the conference and pre-conference sessions.

Registration & Fees

Full registration fees include workshops, institutes, and general sessions, Saturday's luncheon, handouts, and a one-year membership for non-members. One-day fees will also be offered. Pre-conference sessions have a separate fee.

Early Full Registration Fees (postmarked by July 10):

NACAC members \$235 US/\$280 CDN
Non-members \$285 US/\$340 CDN
Parent couple members \$320 US/\$385 CDN
Parent couple non-members \$370 US/\$445 CDN

After July 10, full conference fees increase by \$55 US/\$65 CDN.

In April, NACAC will publish a conference booklet with more information about registration, workshops, child care and teen programs, pre-conference sessions, etc. To request a booklet, please e-mail info@nacac.org with your name and address and let us know whether you would like to receive the booklet by mail or e-mail. All registration information will also be posted at www.nacac.org.

If you do not have e-mail access, request a booklet from:

NACAC Conference
970 Raymond Ave, #106
St. Paul, MN 55114
651.644.3036

fax: 651.644.9848
info@nacac.org
www.nacac.org

Schedule

August 12	8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. • Pre-Conference Sessions
August 13	8:30 – 10:00 a.m. • Opening Session 10:30 a.m. – noon • Workshop Period 1 1:15 – 5:00 p.m. • Institutes 5:15 – 6:45 p.m. • Reception
August 14	8:30 – 10:00 a.m. • General Session 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. • Workshop Period 2 1:45 – 3:15 p.m. • Workshop Period 3 3:45 – 5:15 p.m. • Workshop Period 4
August 15	8:30 – 10:00 a.m. • Workshop Period 5 10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. • Workshop Period 6 12:30 – 3:00 p.m. • Awards Luncheon/Closing

Balancing Act



By Kathryn Reiss and Tom Strychacz
January/February 2006 *Adoptive Families*

Within six months of coming to us, our new daughters both celebrated birthdays, Alexandra turned 11; Angie, 13. “Whoa—a *teenager*!” Angie teased. “Get ready for my rebellion!”

“No fair,” we objected. Teens have generally logged in long years of growing up with their parents before pulling away. We hadn’t had Angie long enough! “You can’t rebel until we’ve had you for 13 years.”

She laughed. “OK, just wait until I’m 26!”

That sounded fine to us.

Branching Out

Angie celebrated becoming a teenager with a sleepover party of new friends. We enjoyed watching her interact with these girls. After so many years of interrupted schooling and moving from foster family to foster family, Angie was blossoming beautifully and developing close friendships. We were happy she was embracing her new life with us.

But she was also embracing her social life with a vengeance. Cheerful and outgoing, Angie was much in demand. The phone was ringing off the hook—always for Angie. A pattern quickly developed. We found ourselves telling her to get off the phone and the computer and limiting her get-togethers. Just as quickly, our restrictions caused conflict. Angie felt we were being unfair. Her friends were nice! What was our problem?

Our problem, we realized, was that our only time together was after school and on weekends, since Angie was at school most of the day, and we were at work. Then, *we* wanted to be the company for our relatively new child. We wanted her to feel that this was her home. And perhaps, at a deeper level, we needed to feel that she wanted to share our lives.

Children who are born into their families or who are adopted as infant or toddlers spend years of quality time at home with parents and siblings. There are outings and special events, of course, but most time is spent just being together. We soak up the feeling of being home without thinking about it, interacting with family members, eating meals together, and doing household chores, reading, talking, listening to music, drawing, spreading out on a the rug with a deck of cards—sometimes doing nothing at all—contribute to our sense of *home*. But if Angie was always out, she would never have this experience.

Pulling Back

Having to regulate a child’s social life was new to us. Nicholas and Daniel, our older sons by birth, were both homebodies at heart. Our biological daughter, Isabel, was too young to have a social life outside of arranged play dates. And Alexandra was content to stay home and play with Isabel, though we encouraged her to invite new friends over. But in the case of Angie’s friends, we felt that our haven, our home, had been invaded by outsiders just as we were trying to get to know our new daughter—and it hurt us when Angie longed to be with them more than with us.

Negotiations ensued. Rules were imposed. Angie could spend the night with a friend, but not the next day as well. Friends needed to come to our house as often as Angie went to theirs . . . But not too often in either case. No phone calls after 9 p.m. and no more than 15 minutes spent on the phone each day.

Angie thought this meant that we didn’t like her friends, didn’t *want* her to have friends. It upset her that
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she didn't have the freedoms so many of her friends did. And she pointed out, correctly, that we often encouraged our other children to invite someone over to play or to go out on a Friday evening. We explained that we try to figure out what each child needs: A quiet child needed encouragement to branch out and be more sociable, while Angie needed family time, home time, bonding time.

Just about any parent of a teenager will agree that, at times, the ground feels shaky. But life with a newly-adopted teenager can seem even shakier. The teen has no background with your family, no firm foundation from which to pull away. It is not Angie's fault—or ours—that our needs sometimes clash. She is developmentally on target, and we are grateful for that, even as it makes us want to bolt the doors. But we are committed to forming as close a bond as possible with her—even if it makes her feel we're too strict. We are always looking for a reasonable middle ground.

A Delicate Dance

Angie realizes that her situation is unique among most of her friends. They've known their families—for good or ill—much longer than she's known us. Their parents may well be ready for some distance. But we want Angie with us, to be one of us, to share routines, to make memories. She says she understands and that she loves us, that she considers herself part of our family and always will. We say that she has to demonstrate that by logging in time with us—and, for our part, we try to say yes more than we say no.

"Can Larisa sleep over on Friday?" "May I go to the movies with Kevin next week?" "Can I buy a new dress and go to the homecoming dance?" yes, yes, yes, and yes. "Can I sleep at Katie's tonight and then take the bus to the mall the next day to shop with friends for that dress, and then later go over to Sarah's for dinner?" No.

It's a balancing act.

Our friends often marvel at our wonderful new daughters and at how well all five of our children get along. We feel lucky—even blessed. Our kids don't appear to be troubled. They are not overly rebellious, rude, or obnoxious. But if there is any downside to older-child adoption, this is it: We don't get to parent our older daughters for as long as we would have had if they would have come to us as babies. We've already missed their first steps, first words, first school days, first lost teeth, first bike rides. So we want to share as many of other firsts still to come as possible.

It's our balancing act as much as Angie's, a delicate dance of reining in and pulling away. We've had to confront our secret anxieties and fears: Maybe the bond we've forged with our new daughters is not truly strong . . . Or maybe Alexandra and Angie are just along for the ride until they turn 18, when they will disappear from our lives for good? But then Angie will say or do something that makes us realize how much she delights in her connection to us.

A Flexible Bond

A few days ago we were all at the chiropractor's office. "You look just like your mom—same spine," the doctor told Angie. "I see a lot of that—this mother-daughter spine."

Angie nodded. "We're both left-handed, too," she informed the doctor. "And we have December birthdays!"

Kathryn and Angie exchanged a secret smile. We're well aware that it isn't genes we share, but something no less special. We hope it will be a strong and elastic bond, one that will stretch through all the years we still have together, through the tumultuous teen years and far beyond.



Adopting A Teen

- The teen years are often frazzling, no matter how long a child has been with your family. Adoption isn't always the issue.
- Your child will change after coming to live with you—but not as much as you might expect. You'll change, too!
- Don't expect your teen to be as excited by or grateful for new opportunities as you think he/she should be.
- Your teen needs the secure roots you give him/her—even when he/she is branching out in other directions.

A Tangled Web

By Debbie B. Riley, September/October 2007 *Adoptive Families*

The Internet requires a cautious approach when teens are looking for answers about adoption.

Patty read books, attended workshops, and met with other adoptive families to familiarize herself with adoption topics. She told her daughter, Stephanie, her adoption story at an early age.

But when Stephanie turned 16, she wanted more detailed information about her adoption and her birthparents, especially the reasons they had made an adoption plan. Patty's replies didn't satisfy Stephanie, who took matters into her own hands and began researching adoption on the Internet.

In adolescence, as parents know well, emotions become complex. At the same time, teens are capable of more sophisticated thinking and want deeper answers to questions such as, "Did my birthmother care about me?" "Did my birthfather care about my birthmother?" and "Why could my birthparents not take care of me?"

As the questions get harder, parents worry how their child might react to knowing the answers, especially if information is negative. In some cases, such as those involving international adoption, there may be no information about a child's birth family. In domestic adoptions, parents might have lost touch with one or both of their birthparents.

Quest for Information

An Internet search may seem right to teens who are ambivalent about talking with their parents about adoption or to those who worry that they will hurt their parents if they request more information. Some children are private about adoption-related emotions, and the anonymity of the Internet appeals to them.

Unfortunately, without parental guidance, it's easy for a teen to encounter misinformation that is not obviously incorrect to the youthful user. Some sites contain angry diatribes about adoption. Others provide skewed accounts that mix reality with misconceptions. Material may be outdated or just wrong. Even accurate information can be hard to process, specially that concerning the social and economic variables that affect placements. Teens seeking information about their birthparents can step into emotionally complex situations for which they are unprepared.

If your teen has been using the Internet for such purposes, discuss together what your teen has found. Consider consulting a counselor to assess his/her emotional readiness for the truth. You may want to offer to help him/her find the information. Ask your adoption agency or other adoptive parents to recommend an online support group appropriate for his/her age.

In Patty's case, she acknowledged her fears about Stephanie's online search and explained the need to proceed cautiously. This opened a dialogue that helped mother and daughter search for the information side by side, in a productive way.



Whose Story Is It, Anyway?

By Fran Eisenman

September/October 2007 *Adoptive Families*

Sharing information about your family gets trickier as your child grows older.

While shopping at a grocery store, Lynn and her three-year-old son, James, were approached by a stranger. The woman looked at James and asked, “Is he adopted? Do you have any children of your own?”

Lynn was accustomed to receiving attention when she and James were in public. Their contrasting appearances often drew looks and comments. She usually gauged the questioner’s sincerity before replying. If someone seemed genuinely interested, she would answer questions patiently, and tell the story of James’ adoption in an upbeat tone that reflected how special their relationship was.

On this occasion, Lynn noticed that James fidgeted as the woman examined his features. “If you’re interested in adoption, I could give you the number of our agency,” she said. “But I really can’t talk now.” The woman shrugged and walked away.

In the car, Lynn asked her son, “What do you want Mommy to do when people ask about us?” James replied, “I don’t like when people look at me, and I don’t want you to talk about me. They’re not our family.”

Growing Awareness

As our children age, they become more aware of the conversations that take place around them—and about them—and they begin to react to what is said. Although curiosity is human nature and not meant to be intrusive or hurtful, questions about a child’s history or birth family may ask for more than you’re willing to share.

The child who looks nothing like his parents may

feel self-conscious when questions arise. Parents who have always been public “ambassadors” for adoption should rethink their responses and assess their child’s comfort level by asking key questions:

- How do you feel when people ask questions about our family?
- Would you like to answer people’s questions, or do you want me to talk?
- What would you like me to say if someone asks where you are from?
- What should we say if someone asks if you were adopted?

Let your child’s wishes guide your response. Remember that poorly-phrased questions, such as “What did he cost?” or “Why did his real mother give him away?”—even if well-intentioned—should be deflected. You might say, “The details of our family’s story are private,” or discuss the economic and practical reasons why children need parents, without divulging personal details.

Continue to talk with your child about what information is private and allow him/her to share the information he/she chooses to share when he/she is older.



To Share or Not to Share?

Never share information your child doesn’t know. This may include details about birthparents, birth siblings, abuse or neglect, or your own fertility.

Ask your child what he/she is comfortable with others knowing and recheck periodically as he/she matures. The child who didn’t mind at age three may be horrified by public attention at age five.

Use words your child knows. Don’t speak about an “orphanage” if you have always told your child that he/she lived in a “baby house” or “child care home.” Gently correct others and reinforce positive terminology, such as “birthmother” and “adoption plan,” whenever possible.

Postpone or simply deflect conversations, whether with strangers or extended family members, if your child appears uncomfortable.

Respect your child’s right to decide what part of his/her story can be shared and with whom.



WEBSITES FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Adoption Clubhouse

<http://www.adoptionclubhouse.org>

The Adoption Clubhouse is a program of the National Adoption Center, whose mission is to expand adoption opportunities throughout the United States, particularly for children with special needs and for those from minority cultures. The Adoption Clubhouse was designed for children's adoption needs. Through the activities and information on this site, children can experience a sense of belonging to a wider adoption community of peers. The site includes a library of books and movies, response to questions kids get asked about being adopted, advice on completing school projects and topics—family tree, bringing in a baby picture,

The Sibling Support Project

www.siblingsupport.org

The Sibling Support Project is a national effort dedicated to the life-long concerns of brothers and sisters of people who have special health, developmental, or mental health concerns. The Sibling Support Project believes that disabilities, illnesses, and mental health issues affect the lives of *all* family members. Consequently, they work to increase the peer support and information opportunities for brothers and sisters of people with special needs and to increase parents' and providers' understanding of sibling issues. Their list connects siblings of all ages.



Books
=
Knowledge

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED

My Body is Private

Girard, Linda Walvoord. (Morton Grove, Illinois: Albert Whitman & Co., 1984)

I Can't Talk About It: A Child's Book About Sexual Abuse

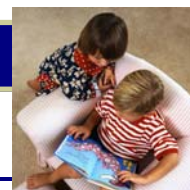
(Portland: Multnomah Press, 1986)

Your Body Belongs to You

Spelman, Cornelia Maude. (Morton Grove, Illinois: Albert Whitman & Co., 1997)



ADOPTION BOOKS FOR CHILDREN



Zachary's New Home: A Story for Foster and Adopted Children

Blomquist, Geraldine and Paul Blomquist. (Washington: Magination Press, 1990)

What to Do When You Dread Your Bed: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Problems with Sleep

Huebner, Dawn. (Washington: Magination Press, 2008)

How It Feels to be Adopted

Krementz, Jill. (New York: Knoph, 1988)

All About Adoption: How Families are Made and How Kids Feel About It

Nemiroff, Marc and Jane Annunziata. (Washington: Magination Press, 2004)

A Story for Traumatized and Grieving Children

Sheppard, Caroline. (Grosse Point Woods, Michigan: 1998)

The Ultimate Teen Guide

Slade, Suzanne. (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2007)

Families Are Forever

Craig Shemin, Deb Capone, and John McCoy (2003)

Mr. Rogers—Let's Talk About It: Adoption

Fred Rogers (1995)

Pugnose Has Two Special Families

Karis Kruzel (1997)

Rosie's Families

Lori Rosove (2001)

Sam's Sister

Juliet C. Bond (2004)

The Best Single Mom in the World: How I Was Adopted

Mary Zisk (2001)

The Red Blanket

Eliza Thomas and Joe Cepeda (2004)

This is How We Became A Family

Wayne Willis (2000)

Tummy Mummy

Michelle Madrid-Branch (2004)

We See the Moon

Carrie Kitze (2003)

We Wanted You

Liz Rosenberg and Peter Catalanotto (2002)

Why Was I Adopted?

Carole Livingston (2000)

You're Not My Real Mother

Molly Friedrich (2004)

BOOKS FOR ADOPTED PARENTS

Strong Parents, Responsible Kids (Parenting Teens With Love and Logic)

By Foster Cline, M.D. and Jim Fay

Raising Your Spirited Child

By Mary heedy Kurcinka

Making Room in Our Hearts (A Book About Open Adoption)

By Micky Duxbury

Adoption Parenting

By Jean Macleod and Sheena Macrae

Parenting the Hurt Child

By Gregory Keck, Ph.D., and Regina Kupecky

Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew

By sherrie Eldridge (1999)

Wasn't Love Supposed to Be Enough? (Biographies of a Long-term Adoptive Parent Support Group and Services for Adoptive Families)

By Van Slyck, Wristen, Dupre-Clark, Mague, and Haggerty (1998)

Raising Adopted Children

By Lois Ruskai Melina (1998)

The Whole Life Adoption Book

By Jayne Schooler (1993)

Insight Into Adoption (Fundamental Differences Between Parented Adopted and Biological Children)

By Barbara Taylor Blomquist (2001)

Real Parents, Real Children: Parenting the Adopted Child

By Holly VanGulden and Lisa M. Bartels-Rabb (1993)

Telling the Truth to Your Adopted or Foster Child: Making Sense of the Past

By Betsy E. Keefer and Jayne E. Schooler (2000)

Making Sense of Adoption

By Lois Ruskai Melina (1989)

Talking to Your Child About Adoption (Infancy Through Teen Years)

By Patricia Martinez Dorner, M.A., LPC

Dialogues About Adoption: Conversations Between Parents and Their Children

By Linda bothun (1994)

Talking With Young Children About Adoption

By Mary Watkins, Ph.D. and Susan Fisher, MD (1993)

Adopting After Infertility

By Patricia Irwin Johnston, M.S. (1992)

