

# GENERAL ADOPTION QUESTIONS

**1. I know what Children's Aid Society (CAS) or agency handled the adoption. How do I obtain information from them? What information will they release?**

The CAS or Family Services that handled the adoption will give you non-identifying background information on your birth mother and her family or on the adoptive family of your child. This information is strictly NON-IDENTIFYING but it may give you some general details about your birth mother's (and sometimes birth father's) age, occupation, religion, social circumstances, number of brothers and sisters, etc. Similar information will be given about the adoptive family to certain birth family members. You can get this non-identifying information by filling in a form from the CAS.

**2. I don't know which agency handled the adoption. How can I find out?**

This information can be obtained from the central office for Social Services of the province you are dealing with. In Ontario the Office of the Custodian of Adoption will help you. Ask Parent Finders for more information.

**3. What if my adoption was private?**

Many adoptions were handled by doctors and lawyers. If this is your situation, it may be difficult to get non-identifying information. You must request your provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services to help you by creating some information for you from the Court Record, which they can access. In Ontario contact the Office of the Custodian of Adoption Information. All Ontario adoptions since 1927 are listed with the Custodian's Office.

**4. What is an Adoption Order?**

An Adoption Order is the legal document received by the adoptive parents at the time of the adoption showing the transfer of parental authority. Adoption Orders are not available in all provinces. The adoptee's birth name is usually on this document. The last name is usually that of the birth mother. Sometimes there is only a first name and an initial and some numbers. It may be the first letter of your surname. With the opening of records in some provinces, adoptees in those provinces receive their birth name as part of their information. Speak to Parent Finders for more details.

**5. What do I do with my information after I receive it?**

Using the background information and the birth name it is sometimes possible to start a search on your own. It is better to do this with the help of a search and support group or a private searcher. You need a search plan and directions on how to conduct your search.

**6. Should I contact everyone in the phone book with the same name?**

NO! NO! NO! The birth mother's family may, even now, be unaware of your birth. This would alert the whole family and would be an invasion of your birth mother's privacy. No phone calls until you are 150% sure that you have the right name, the right family and the right birth mother. Even then, consult with someone at Parent Finders. They will tell you how to write a letter or make a phone call.

**7. Can I have my hospital/medical records from my birth?**

If you are adopted, NO. Only the registered patients (this would be your birth mother) can view the medical record. Unless you have her name and her permission to view the record, it is unavailable to you. In certain circumstances your doctor and/or the CAS may be able to obtain information from the medical record. If you have a life-threatening medical condition you should contact the agency involved and get a letter from

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your doctor describing this condition. It may be possible for you to have a Health, Safety or Welfare search. Birth mothers who are unsure of the date of birth can get a "Proof of Birth" from the hospital which will verify the birth date.

**8. Why aren't my birth parents registered in any registry? Don't they care?**

Many birth parents do not know that they can register anywhere. In the past, they were often told by the agency NOT to try to contact their children. There may be family circumstances that are as yet unknown to you. There may be medical problems. Or they may be deceased.

**9. When can I expect the child I gave up to begin searching for me?**

That is a difficult question to answer. Some adoptees want to know; some wait until they are over 18 or leave home; some wait until the birth of their first child; some never search. Males sometimes take longer than females to search. Not being registered does not always mean the adoptee doesn't care. There are no rules. Or they may just not know they can!

**10. Should I register with any other organizations? Who else can help?**

Always register with a search and support group that is close to you. A large cross-Canada organization like Parent Finders can give you the help and advice you need while searching. The person you are looking for may have moved and registered with another Parent Finders group. If you want a private searcher, ask Parent Finders for the names of trusted people experienced in adoption searches. We also recommend looking at the many Internet adoption sites and registries.

**11. Are church records of any use to me?**

Baptism records may show some additional birth information, but most churches do not allow you to study their records.

**12. How much will a search cost me?**

If you do your own search the cost should be very low. If you hire private search assistance, the costs will vary. It all depends on how much information you have and how far your search takes you. No guarantees of success can ever be made.

**14. As a birth parent, how do I tell my family about the child I gave up?**

All birth parents worry about this, **particularly** birth mothers. They worry especially about how to tell their children at home. Experience shows that families are usually very supportive and not judgmental. Today's attitudes toward adoption and unplanned pregnancy are very different from those of only a few years ago. A support group can help you find the right words and the right time to tell your family.

**15. How can I make my adoptive parents understand that searching for my birth family does not mean I don't love them?**

Adoptees need to reassure their adoptive families of their love and loyalty, especially during the early stages of a reunion when a family may feel very threatened. The search is about the adoptee and not a rejection of the adoptive family. Experience shows that relationships between adoptees and their adoptive families generally improve after a reunion. In most cases, when adoptees discover their biological roots they reach more peace with themselves and are more content in their adoptive families.

