

## OPENNESS IN ADOPTION CONTINUUM

Open adoption is increasingly common in domestic and even international adoptions. The amount and level of openness varies with every family. Open relationships can occur with a variety of individuals, not just birth parents, but also siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, former foster parents, and anyone who was important to the child prior to their adoption. What follows are some possible scenarios illustrating the wide range of relationships that can occur. Any open adoptive relationship may move between levels through the life of the relationships, becoming more or less open over time.

### Completely Closed Adoption

No information is given to the birthparents about the adoptive parent(s) by the agency. The adoptive parent(s) receive little to no information about the birth parents before or after the adoption. The birthparents & adoptive parents never meet or talk to one another.

The agency or lawyer share only non-identifying information about the birthparents to the adoptive parent(s) and about the adoptive parent(s) to the birthparents. The parents do not talk directly to one another.

Birthparent(s) and adoptive parent(s) share non-identifying background information directly with each other prior to the birth of the child via phone, e-mail, meeting at an agency or at a neutral setting. There is no contact after placement.

Birthparent(s) and adoptive parent(s) share non-identifying information directly prior to placement. They may or may not have met. They share photos & letters through an intermediary (agency or lawyer) after placement. The birthparent(s) may respond with a letter including new medical or social history.

Birth family members and adoptive family maintain non-identifying contact after placement via an intermediary. They visit at agency events after placement.

Birthparent(s) and adoptive parent(s) talk directly to one another over the phone or email a couple of times a year after the adoption is finalized. Minimal identifying information is shared. The child may or may not participate in the phone conversations. There are no visits.

There is direct contact & identifying information is shared prior to placement. There is occasional phone or email contact after finalization; birthparent(s) and adoptive parent(s) and child meet once a year at a neutral setting e.g. agency picnic.

Families have exchanged identifying information. There is regular phone & or email contact between adoptive family and birth family prior to placement and after finalization. Visits are held at neutral locations or homes once or twice a year.

Interactions between families are similar to extended families that visit regularly.

### Completely Open Adoption

## POST ADOPTION CONTACT AGREEMENTS

If there is a contract for contact after finalization between birthparents and adoptive families, the agreement should be reviewed with an adoption professional. Sometimes this agreement is called a PACA or Post Adoption Contact Agreement. The PACA can be written into the Adoption Agreement and become a legal and binding document in NYS. If the adoptive parents do not comply with the post adoption contract they could be in contempt of court. It is highly recommended that if you promise to have an open relationship with your child's birthparent, you keep your promise. If you back out on this promise for contact (for any reason other than the best interest of your child) and your child learns of this later in life your child will have serious trust issues with you!