



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where can I meet with Journeys of the Heart Staff to privately discuss my situation and have my questions answered? You pick the location that feels best to you – your home, a restaurant, a park, or our office. Whatever location you choose, we want to make sure your privacy is protected at all times. All you need to do is call and tell us when and where you'd like to meet.

What if I don't want counseling? You decide if you want counseling. The service is available but we would never force it on anyone.

Will anything provided by Journeys cost me money? There is no charge to you for any service.

What types of adoptions does Journeys facilitate? Our staff will help you explore the type of adoption arrangement that best suits you. We do open adoptions, semi-open and closed adoptions.

Open Adoption: The relationship is between the child, birth parent and adopting parents. There might be visits, phone calls, e-mails and or letters and pictures. A common adoption agreement has one visit per year with letters and pictures being sent several times. This allows for the child to know that he or she is loved and cared about by the birth family and a chance to know the birth parent. It also gives the child access to family history, stories, medical information. Some adopting families and birth parents agree to more contact.

Semi-Open Adoption: Letters and pictures are exchanged between the adopting parent(s) and the birth parent(s). This keeps the birth parent current with what is happening in the child's life.

Closed Adoption: No contact of any kind between the adopting parent(s) and the birth parent(s).

What about my expenses? Journeys of the Heart can pay for any expenses that are related to the pregnancy. These include food, shelter, maternity clothes and medical coverage. You work directly with the staff to come up with a plan regarding your

financial needs. Even after you have chosen a family you continue to interact with the staff regarding your money needs. Journeys does not believe it is a good idea for families and birth parents to directly work out expenses because problems can come up that might jeopardize the relationship.

What if I don't have a place to live or need emergency housing? Journeys staff will help you find emergency housing or an apartment, depending upon your needs.

When do I sign legal papers regarding the adoption? Each state has different laws about signing legal documents. For instance, in Oregon you would sign legal documents prior to being discharged from the hospital. In Illinois you can sign 72 hours after the birth. In Washington you can sign prior to the birth and the documents become legally binding 48 hours after the birth.

What happens if I change my mind? Changing your mind is your right any time before you sign the legal documents. However, once the documents are signed and the baby is in the custody of the adopting parents the adoption is a binding agreement except in Washington where the documents are legally binding 48 hours after the birth.

What about the birth father? We are pleased to work with birth fathers during this process, fully incorporating them into the adoption plan. However, if the birth father is not involved we do not need his participation. Each state has different laws about notifying the birth father. We will discuss this with you and how it pertains to your particular situation.

What happens at the hospital? Whatever you want. Usually, adopting parents are called and are at the hospital during the birth. You decide if you want them in your room or if you want them to be called in afterwards. Journeys staff will be available to you at the hospital. You may spend as much or as little time with the baby as you want.

What about naming the baby? You can give the baby the name that you want which will go on the original birth certificate. The adopting parents also name the baby and that name will go on the amended birth certificate which is completed after the adoption proceedings. We think it's positive for the child if you and the adopting parents agree on the name – we encourage this discussion prior to the birth.

How do I choose a couple to adopt my baby? You can look at portfolios which include a letter to you and photos of their lives. This will give you visual images of them, their home and their interests. If you want to know more about them or are having a hard time choosing, we can give you their home study, a document completed by a social worker that approves them for adoption (without any identifying information). This document will give you an in-depth idea about their childhood and early adult history as well as more information about their marriage, parenting style, values and ideas about adoption.

After selecting a family, what is the next step? Once you have chosen a family you will usually meet with them. If they are an out-of-state couple then you might want to talk with them on the phone or receive a videotape of them. All out-of-state couples are willing to fly to your state of residence to meet with you. The meeting takes place at a restaurant or at Journeys' office with a staff person present. Usually this meeting confirms your feelings of wanting them to parent your child.

How can I be sure that the couple I choose to adopt my baby are good people?

Journeys of the Heart completes a thorough investigation of all couples who come to adopt through this agency. Child abuse and criminal checks (including FBI finger prints) are done on each person. A social worker spends time with the family in their home and they speak about many issues that are important to adoption. The home is inspected for safety issues, housekeeping standards and general suitability for a child. Couples have four to five references send in letters that speak to their ability to raise a child and the strengths and weaknesses of their marriage. A doctor must give each person a physical and these findings are sent to the agency. The couple's latest IRS 1040 to prove income is reviewed. After the social worker has met with the family for a lengthy period of time, inspected their home and reviewed all the supporting documents, he or she makes a recommendation either supporting them as adoptive parents or not. Journeys of the Heart does not approve all families who apply to us.

All families will have gone through Journeys of the Heart's extensive adoption education program which explores talking to children about adoption, adoption issues at each stage of a child's development, trans-racial adoption, attachment and bonding theory, adoption vocabulary, adoption and the teenager and more. Journeys fully discusses the importance of always presenting the birth parents in a loving and caring way to the child.

How can I be sure that the adopting parents will follow through with letters and pictures? The adopting parents sign a document agreeing to send the number of letters and pictures that you want. Journeys of the Heart would support you in getting enforcement of any adoption agreement, which in some states is legally binding. Most adopting parents are so grateful to you that they would never consider not sending what you wanted from them.

What if my baby is born with a serious medical issue? If your baby was born with a major medical issue Journeys may have to locate another family to adopt your baby.

What about finding a family through the classified ads in the paper or on-line?

That seems easy but it can be very dangerous. Families in the classifieds may or may not be legitimate. Anyone can put an ad in the paper or on-line. They may or may not have gone through all the investigation and security checks that Journeys of the Heart requires of their families. You might choose a family who looks good but who could be criminals, child abusers or not have the ability to be good parents for your child.. It is safer to have an agency to oversee the families and be sure that they are good, emotionally healthy people.

What if a friend or acquaintance approaches me about adopting my baby?

Sometimes during a pregnancy, you may be approached by friends or relatives about adopting the baby. Journeys can work with a friend or relative to adopt your baby if you wish. We insist that any family go through the same thorough investigation process, just like any other Journeys family. We like to give you a variety of families to choose from but if you feel certain that you want this family and they meet our requirements that would be fine. If you still want to make sure your friends/family are the best choice we can present you with other family portfolios. This way you can be sure you are choosing the best family to parent the baby. However, whether you want this friend to parent your child or not, you should tell all people inquiring about your adoption that discussions regarding the matter should be directed through Journeys of the Heart.

Any other questions you may have, feel free to contact our staff at any time.

Email us now, info@journeysoftheheart.net or call our 24 hour toll free phone number (800) 876-0575.