

Post-Placement Reporting

Important and Beneficial

By Terry Petrone

The simple act of failing to fill out post-adoption reports has a resonating effect on adoptions worldwide

During the past 15 years, the adoption world has seen many changes. Open adoption has become common practice as agencies and professionals recognize the positive impact open adoption has on all members of the adoption triad — the adoptive parents, birth parents and children.

At its most basic level, the open adoption agreement involves the exchange of letters and photos through the adoptive agency. International adoption continues to rise in popularity and to change. Countries are now asking agencies to provide post-placement reports, and asking families to supply annual updates, including photos, about the child's health, development, adjustment and daily routine.

Adoptive families must be more open and willing to comply with this important new request for information after placement. International adoptive families sign agreements with countries stating that they will send reports on their child, and domestic families sign agreements with birth parents agreeing to exchange information at least once a year. It is vital for adoptive parents to willingly comply with these agreements.

Internationally, countries like Ukraine have slowed down adoptions and are considering shutting down adoptions to the United States due to noncompliance with these post-placement reports. Vietnam has said that after a year they will re-evaluate agencies to make sure that they are complying with their regulations, including whether families are following through with post-placement reports. International adoptive families who do not comply with these agreements may jeopardize another family's ability to adopt internationally.

"Countries are very strict about getting these reports," said Irina Kuznetsov, who coordinates Kazakhstan adoptions for Adoptions From The Heart, a regional adoption agency based in suburban Philadelphia. "The Kazakhstan government continually warns us about the very real threat of a moratorium on foreign adoptions if they don't hear from families."

Families adopting domestically who do not follow through with their agreements to provide information to their birth family may not jeopardize domestic adoption for others, but they are hurting the woman who helped them create a family. Social workers spend a great deal of time counseling upset birth parents whose adoptive families either refuse or are chronically late sending photos and updates they agreed to provide. It is heartbreaking to listen to the pleas of birth parents who call continuously, waiting to hear something, only to be told that the family moved and left no forwarding address, or to have to tell them that the agency has been trying to get information for the past month but the family will not comply.

Adoptive families who are not complying need to change their thinking about these reports. Instead of seeing them as a chore to be dreaded, families should approach the reports in a more positive light. They truly help the country or the birth parent reaffirm that they made the correct decision to place these children with the adoptive family. They also show the adopted children that their country of birth or birth parents are interested in how they are doing, that they were not "abandoned" by them, but rather were carefully thought about and a conscious decision was made to give them more opportunities than they could provide.

To help make a habit of compiling these

reports, turn them into a family project. Mark them on the calendar and get the children involved. Parents can write the reports with or without help from their child and children can help pick photos to send with them. As children get older, let them help write the reports. This also gives families the opportunity to open a dialogue about adoption.

“We created a computer template that we update each year on the children’s Gotcha Days” — the dates they were adopted,” said Melia Hoffman, who with husband Ted McFadden adopted son Rory Sergei, 6, and daughter Madison, 4, from Kazakhstan in 2003. In addition to medical and general updates, the family includes the latest news on the children’s daily routines such as napping schedules, favorite activities and foods, schools and church they attend, and about 10 different photos.

The updates provide other benefits. “The baby home in Kazakhstan posts the photos, which also helps other adoptive couples see the caring and concern that continues even after the

children leave,” Hoffman said. “It’s also one way we keep a connection to our children’s birth country. We tell them the story of how we went to Kazakhstan to get them.”

Ultimately, the reports enable adoptive parents to express appreciation for the children being

actually do them. “We know families are busy, but they must understand that their procrastination can actually prevent future families from being as happy as they are now,” Kuznetsov said.

Other people are counting on you — please

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placed with them and thriving under their care. “Adoption is a labor of love — and so is continuing the process. It’s a small price to pay with all the joy and love you get from your children,” McFadden said.

However your family chooses to complete these updates, the most important thing is to

don’t let them down.

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