

Information Packet
for
Prospective Adoptive Families

Aggieland Pregnancy Outreach

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The Agency Context

Bringing a child into your home through adoption can be a breathtaking and spiritually exhilarating experience. The staff of Aggieland Pregnancy Outreach is privileged beyond description to be used by God in serving babies, birth families and adoptive families. As an agency licensed by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, APO adheres to and exceeds the standards set by our licensing body. At Aggieland Pregnancy Outreach, we believe that adopting through an agency provides the highest level of quality and legal safety for both the prospective adoptive parents and the prospective birthparents. Private adoption, using only the services of an attorney, does not offer counseling and education to all parties involved, nor does it offer long-term support through the years as families navigate adoption relationships. Additionally, adopting outside the agency context has different legal considerations offering a birthparent time to change their mind about adoption even after relinquishing their parental rights.

Eligibility Requirements

A system designed to meet the needs of children will make every effort to screen prospective parents. It is very difficult, even controversial work, and many service providers have given up on it. APO's goal in the adoption process is to place children in the most loving and stable environment possible. As a Christian ministry, we also desire to point children to Jesus Christ. We do this indirectly by providing them with adoptive parents who share our beliefs; who have a strong faith in Christ. As we share our thoughts to try to help you determine whether or not you are good candidates for our program, please keep in mind that we are not looking for perfect families. That's a good thing, isn't it, because there aren't any perfect families! More than anything, we are looking for big-hearted people who love kids and birth families as well.

Primary Requirements for Adopting Through APO:

- The adoptive couple must be a legally married man and woman for a minimum of three (3) years.
- The adoptive couple must each be professing Christians and members of the same Bible-believing church who share the same basic doctrinal beliefs as APO as outlined in our statement of faith.
- The adoptive couple must commit that one parent will be a "stay at home" parent until the child reaches kindergarten. Preferably, this stay at home parent would not have to work, but if that is not possible, this parent may work up to 20 hours per week outside of the home (including travel time to and from work).

APO's Statement of Faith

We believe:

...the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, and authoritative Word of God.

...that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

...in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father and in His personal return in power and glory.

...that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential, and that this salvation is received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and not as a result of good works such as baptism, confirmation, being a member of a church, or other efforts to earn salvation. It is a gift from God, not anything we can earn.

...in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by who's indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life and to perform good works.

...in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost, they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

...in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Organizations such as (but not limited to) Free Masons, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and Jehovah's Witness are not in alignment with APO's statement of faith.

About the Children and Birthparents

Because our adoption program is rooted in our pregnancy program, most of the children we are involved with are newborn infants. Since most of the planning is done before birth, we usually do not know the sex of the baby. We anticipate that most of the children will be healthy, but hasten to add that there are never any certainties when it comes to health. There are occasions where older children will be available for adoption. The frequency of these occasions is difficult to predict, as are the ages of the children.

The children naturally reflect the characteristics of the region's fairly diverse population. They come from various ethnic and racial backgrounds. We know that adopted children maintain many of the personality traits of their birthparents. It is realistic to expect that a child brought into an adoptive family will grow up to reflect both nature (his/her biology/DNA) and nurture (the environment of the adoptive family).

Although it is difficult to generalize, we want to tell you a little about the birth families we have been privileged to get to know. Many of the birthparents range in age from 18 to 25 years old. Some birthparents are as young as 13 or older than 40. Some of them have taken college classes and have promising futures. Some are very poor and some come from affluent families. Some people might stereotype them as "reckless and uncaring." We regard them as exceptionally responsible and caring.

Remarkably, in the “me first” culture in which we live, their character causes them to elevate the needs of their child above their own wishes and desires.

As you no doubt realize, few persons working through an untimely pregnancy consider adoption these days. Abortion and single parenting are chosen far more frequently. Those who choose adoption do not make the choice lightly – it is an excruciating decision even when they are convinced in their hearts that it is the best option.

There are various factors that motivate them to choose adoption. Many birthmothers believe in the importance of fathers and are drawn to adoption as a way to make sure their child has a stable man in the child’s life. Some are already single parents and find the prospect of additional responsibilities overwhelming. Sadly, there is often a financial dimension to the decision. Many birthparents lack the resources to provide the quality of care they believe their children deserve. Others, after searching their souls, decide, “they just aren’t ready for parenting.”

Whatever the particular reasons for the decision, it is clear to us that adoption is an expression of their sacrificial love for the child. One birth mom put it this way,

“I didn’t give my baby away – I gave a family to my child.”

The Adoption Process

The process for prospective adoptive parents consists of the following phases:

- Information Gathering
- Education
- Intake
- Home Study
- Waiting
- Matching
- Placement
- Finalization
- Post Finalization

We believe the process moves through these phases in a very sensible and natural progression. The following paragraphs detail the process.

Information Gathering

Adoption is a much more complicated subject than most people realize. As couples approach the prospect of adoption, there are many questions to answer and decisions to make. Are we really ready for adoption? Can we accept that parenting an adopted child may not be the same as parenting a biological child? What form of adoption do we prefer? International, Special Needs, Infant, Closed, Open? Where do we begin?

Good decision-making requires good information gathering, so the agency’s first concern is to give you as much information as early and as inexpensively as possible. We know that you cannot afford to put a lot of time and effort and money into a prospect that does not really fit your style and your goals.

Education

The next step is to attend an Informational meeting. That meeting is attended by all the families who have expressed interest in the program and who feel they meet the basic eligibility requirements. It is a two-hour overview of the philosophy, policies and practices of the agency. There is no charge for this meeting.

Interested families will then attend the Pre-Application Adoption Education Class. This two-day seminar addresses many aspects of adoption. It explores Biblical examples of adoption, the history of adoption in America, explanation of open adoption, excellence in adoptive relationships, tax and legal implications in adoption. We address basic parenting issues such as safety in the home, attachment, bonding, and discipline. A panel of adoptive parents and birthparents come to share their experiences and to answer questions as well.

It is our sincere hope that after absorbing all this information, families will be able to make sound decisions about pursuing adoption. Families who are interested in pursuing adoption through Aggieland Pregnancy Outreach, Inc. will then submit an Application Questionnaire.

Intake

Because our goal is to serve the birthparents to the best of our ability, we admit prospective adoptive families who we believe are the most suitable candidates for the birthparents. It is a tremendous challenge to do this in an efficient, thorough and equitable manner, but we believe it is our most responsible course of action. We are committed to this standard of practice.

The usual intake process calls for each couple to meet for an interview with an adoption worker. If the couple meets the criteria of our program and are considered a match, they will begin the home study process. This is a preliminary acceptance. The evaluation will continue with the upcoming home study.

Home Study

A Home Study is required by law for all adoptions. Its purpose is to assess not only the physical home, but also the family members in the home. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission requires us to gather much background information for the home study such as: criminal and child abuse background checks, documentation of financial stability, documentation about the health of each family member, information about the physical home, references, etc.

After the prospective adoptive family has gathered all the necessary documentation, the agency case worker will schedule a time to begin the Home Study interviews. He or she will meet with the prospective adoptive parents individually and jointly. He or she will also spend time with any other children that may be in the home. The interviews will cover such topics as:

- Motivation
- Marriage
- Family Life
- Parenting Style
- Attitudes toward Adoption
- Home Environment

Once we have gathered all the information, the Home Study document will be prepared and a copy given to the family to review for accuracy. We will then make a formal approval or non-approval decision. Note that the agency reserves the right to rescind the "Approval for Placement" status at any time for any cause.

Preparation, Support and Waiting

Preparation

Once we have approved a family for placement, they are eligible to be chosen. In the open adoption system, the birth parents choose the adoptive family. The birth parents, not the adoption agency, determine which family will be the most appropriate for their child. They are first introduced to prospective adoptive families by viewing "Profile Books" that our waiting to adopt families have created. The Profile Book contains information about the couple including their story, their home, their interests, their family and friends and a letter to prospective birth parent(s). Additional information including their tastes and preferences, personality characteristics and thoughts on open adoption can also be provided.

Support Groups

With their evaluation behind them, prospective adoptive families can relax and prepare to accept a child into their home. Given the sense of excitement and anticipation families feel at this point, it is an ideal time to convene as a group and learn from each other. Our Adoptive Family Support Group meets twelve times per year. *A schedule of the support group meetings for the current and/or coming year will be provided at the pre-application meeting.*

Waiting

Despite the pleasure of getting to know other families in support group, this time of waiting is usually the most difficult because families no longer have a sense of making progress toward their goal. Families often feel less "plugged in" to information as to how things are going. It is common for families to have ambivalent feelings when they learn a birth parent has chosen a different family. They are happy for the family, but also wonder why they were not chosen. It is important for all of us to work together to make the time of waiting meaningful and constructive.

Families are welcome to contact the agency "just to stay in touch." Many families will make small improvements or updates to their Profile Book during this time. This gives them a sense of action in what otherwise is a passive portion of the process. It is a challenge for families to establish and maintain an effective state of readiness. On the one hand, we advise people to presume they will not be chosen for years and to live their usual lifestyle. On the other hand, we recommend people be ready to go to the hospital with an hour's notice. Taxing as this balancing act sounds, most handle it gracefully.

Matching

The waiting phase ends when a prospective adoptive family receives "the call" notifying them they have been chosen. Usually this call is made by an agency representative and needless to say, creates quite a stir.

The next step is meeting with the birthparent(s). This meeting can take place at any convenient location. Under usual circumstances an APO staff member is there to serve as “ice breaker” and to make sure pertinent issues are covered. Families generally go into the meeting with trepidation and come out relaxed and relieved. After the meeting, we individually ask the prospective adoptive parents and the birthparents to give prayer and consideration to the new information. If both parties feel a peace about the situation, they are considered “matched.” If either party does not feel a peace about proceeding, the birthparent(s) will look through available Profile Books again.

Some birthparents will want to meet more than one prospective adoptive family before they make their final decision. This often creates some anxiety for all the prospective adoptive couples who meet those birthparents. They know that only one couple will be chosen. Profile Books might not provide all the information the birthparents need to feel comfortable about a placement decision. We know there is more to “match making” than common interests between parties. Some call it “chemistry.” We believe the Holy Spirit is the best match-maker and He is able to make bells and whistles go off within birth parents to confirm their decision.

Placement

After the birth of the baby, there are different means by which the baby may be discharged from the hospital. At times, the birthmother chooses to sign her Affidavit of Voluntary Relinquishment 48 hours after the baby’s birth while she and the baby are still at the hospital. If that occurs, the baby is released to the adoptive family directly from the hospital. There is little risk in this adoption scenario if both the birth mother and the birth father have relinquished their parental rights.

At other times the birthmother may need more time to contemplate her decision. She might take the baby home or she may release the baby to the adoptive family in a legal risk scenario if the family is willing to accept this risk. This is a precious, yet precarious time for the family. **It is during this time, prior to the birthparents’ signing of the relinquishment papers, that the adoptive family is at the greatest emotional risk.** The birthparents may change their minds for any reason and request the baby’s return. **This is more than a theoretical possibility. It happens!**

Once a birth mother signs the Affidavit of Voluntary Relinquishment, and the birth father has signed his corresponding document, their parental rights are terminated. A six-month supervisory period of the adopting family follows. During this time, the adoptive family will send monthly written reports to the agency, attend monthly support group meetings, and the agency will visit in the family’s home at least once. Presuming all is well after the six-month period, the family may proceed with the finalization process through the courts.

Finalization

At the end of the six-month supervisory period, the agency prepares the necessary paperwork to begin the finalization process and sends these documents to the adoptive family’s attorney. The adoptive family will contract independently with the attorney of their choice who reserves a court date. The adoptive family will join the attorney in the courtroom and stand before the judge to declare their desire to become the legal parents of the child. Most families enjoy taking pictures during the court appearance and having a time of celebration afterwards. When the court enters the Order of Adoption, it notifies the state, which issues a revised birth certificate. The adoption is complete.

The fees for this attorney are paid directly to the attorney’s office by the adoptive family at the time of the finalization. APO does have a close working relationship with some experienced attorneys in

the Brazos Valley whose fees have been declared to us up front. The APO attorney who handles the birthparent termination of rights is available to APO families for their finalization. This is highly recommended for an effective and timely finalization.

After Finalization

Even though the adoption is complete, we hope our relationship with you will continue and you will remain in touch. Some of our reasons for wanting to continue the relationship are selfish. To begin with, we need your feedback so we can continually improve our program. Through this extraordinary experience, you got to know us well, and you can help us make our program better. Furthermore, as the persons who are living the open adoption experience, you have much to teach us as your family grows and as you encounter a variety of situations. We also need your continuing interest and support. Sometimes we come across puzzling circumstances and we would like to call on our alumni for advice. Often, we ask our veterans to help us in the never-ending project of describing the program to the general public.

We like to think we can be helpful to you as well. If ever you run into a confounding situation related to adoption, we are a good place to look for information. We can do some troubleshooting if necessary. We can keep you abreast of future adoption seminars around the country and emerging literature in the adoption community. We publish a newsletter to keep folks informed, and now and then we organize special events to bring together the open adoption community and renew old friendships. We invite you to continue attendance of support group meetings to encourage other families walking through the adoption process.

In times past, adoption was considered a one-time event. Now we recognize that it is a lifelong experience, and the need to stay current never ends. Many people once considered adoption a game to be won or lost. Social workers and participants had a wary, almost adversarial relationship. Happily, those days are gone. We are in this process together for the long haul, and that's the way we like it.

The Typical Process of Adopting through APO

Adoptive Parents

APO

1. Initial call for information	1a. Answer questions 1b. Send to website for information packet
2. Fill out "Fact Sheet" which tells us you are interested in our program	2. Send confirmation upon receipt
3. Confirm attendance at Informational Meeting	3. Send notice of Informational Meeting
4. Attend Informational Meeting	4. Conduct Informational Meeting: a two-hour overview of the philosophy, policies, and practices of the agency.
5. Return Pre-Application Adoption Education Class Registration Form with payment	5. Receive the Registration Form and Payment
6. Attend Pre-Application Adoption Education Class	6. Conduct Pre-Application Adoption Education: two half-day sessions to bring pre- applicants up-to-date on the contemporary adoption scene and to give an honest appraisal of open adoption, considering both its' strengths and weaknesses.
7. Submit Application	7. Schedule intake interview with each couple
8. Intake Interview	8. Intake Interview
9. Submit supporting documents for Home Study	9. Schedule interviews for Home Study
10. Home Study Completed and Approved	10. Home Study Completed and Approved
11. Prepare Online Profile and Profile Book	11. Receive Online Profile and Profile Book
12. Attend quarterly Support Group meetings: January, April, July, October	12. Facilitate regular support group meetings for adoptive families
13. Be creative, PRAYERFUL and very patient	13. Notify family when they have been chosen by birth family
14. Match meeting with birth family – affirm compatibility or disengage	14. Facilitate Match Meeting
15. Begin relationship with birth family	15. Provide support in navigating new relationship

16. Notify agency of birth	16. Notify Adoptive Family of birth Coordinate adoption plan at the hospital Arrange hospital discharge Arrange entrust ceremony
17. Bring the baby into your home a. Provide monthly written report to agency b. Attend monthly support group meetings c. Provide regular photos to birth family	17. Provide adoption supervision for at least 6 months
18. Arrange court date with attorney for finalization	18. Recommend to court that adoption be finalized which leads to revised birth certificate

Identified Adoption

An Identified Adoption occurs when an adoptive couple identifies or establishes a relationship with a birthparent and then brings that relationship to APO. Either the adoptive couple or the birthparent may initiate the relationship with APO.

In assisting an Identified Adoption, APO desires to maintain the same high level of excellence in counseling, preparation, and follow up for all parties involved.

Prospective adoptive couples are required to go through all the steps listed in the “Typical Process of Adopting Through APO” above, however, the order of the steps might be altered. The couple will attend our Informational Meeting (or view a video) AND also attend our 2-day Pre-Application Adoption Education Seminar along with all other steps noted. Because the 2-day seminar is only held a few times per year, the couple might in fact receive the baby into their home before they are able to attend this seminar. Nonetheless, we feel this seminar is so valuable that we require attendance before the adoption can be finalized.

For the birthparent(s), we will provide the same counseling we would to any other prospective birthparent in our program. Any financial or material assistance the birthparent needs will be provided by the agency. Those expenses will then be passed through to the adoptive family. (More information about fees and pass through expenses are found later in this packet.)

If, for any reason, the birthparent identified by the prospective adoptive couple decides against adoption after APO has agreed to assist with the Identified Adoption, APO does not guarantee that the prospective adoptive couple will automatically be accepted as a traditional waiting-to-adopt family through APO. Accepting these families into our program will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

An Explanation of Adoption Fees

We want to take a moment to share our perspective on the important subject of adoption fees. APO's fees are low relative to the average adoption fees in the country. We actually wish that we could provide adoption services at no charge at all. To some, it seems as if the cost of an adoption equates with the value of a child. Please know there is no monetary value that anyone can place on the life of another. It is for this reason we wish we could separate the discussion of fees from the process of bringing a child into a home.

It must be understood that adoption fees do not "pay for a baby." Just as fees paid to doctors and hospitals for labor and delivery don't "pay for a baby," adoption fees simply cover the costs of providing services to birth families and adoptive families to facilitate the adoption process.

We are often asked, "Why does it cost so much to adopt a baby?!" In the course of providing any kind of social service, there are certain basic costs involved: rent, utilities, office equipment, consumable office supplies, insurance, legal fees, licensing fees, staff salaries, continuing education, etc. Additionally, we offer benevolence to our clients in need to ensure their health and safety.

We are grateful for tax laws that allow for an adoption tax **credit** of up to \$13,810. That being the case, the adoption costs would be very, very low for qualifying families meeting the IRS requirements for the tax credit. The adopting family would merely experience a cost shift from the IRS to the adoption agency. Go to <http://www.irs.gov> and search for Adoption Tax Credit for the most current information. Please consult your accountant for clarification.

Even with all of that said, we feel it is important for you to understand some of the other factors that have some bearing on the expense of adoption.

Non-Profit Organizations

We are convinced that the most appropriate context for the provision of adoption services is the non-profit agency. Non-profit means our services are non-commercial. The agency has no owner except for the community at large. The staff receives reasonable salaries. The staff is not motivated by the prospect of profit.

Financial and Community Accountability

We are accountable to God first, our board of directors next, and to communities in general. We seek to honor God in all aspects operations and have chosen to become accountable to sources outside of our own organization. APO is a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) and is also a United Way partner agency. We undergo an annual audit by an independent auditor. This audit is reviewed not only by our own board of directors, but also by ECFA and the United Way. Additionally, APO's information can be found on the Guide Star website at <http://www.guidestar.org/organizations/74-2893803/aggieland-pregnancyoutreach.aspx> as another means of staying transparent in our operations.

The Agency Context

People entering our program enter a larger system. The agency context brings the advantages of respectability, continuity and stability, birthparent preparation, broader connections, and supervision. APO is licensed to provide adoption services by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). As such, our adoption practices are audited annually by the HHSC to ensure compliance with state regulations. With these advantages, comes the responsibility of overhead expenses. Our most recent compliance report from the state:

https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Search_Texas_Child_Care/ppFacilityDetails.asp?ptype=RC&fid=282914

Method of Setting Fees

Many agencies set their adoption fees by taking their annual expenses of general overhead, expenses for birthparents who choose adoption, expenses for birthparents who choose to parent, and other non-adoption related program expenses. Then they divide by the number of anticipated adoption placements. This is a collective sharing of costs by adoptive families for all agency expenditures.

We at APO have chosen a different method for setting our fees. The adoptive family will pay the costs most directly related to their own adoption. We do not factor in the costs of our other programs that benefit the welfare of children. Those other costs are financed through charitable support. *Because some adoption scenarios incur greater expenses than others, we have chosen to itemize the expenses so that fees paid by each adoptive family reflect costs most directly linked to their corresponding birthmother.*

Charitable Support

Our pregnancy support program is underwritten by individuals in and around the Brazos Valley, by alumni adoptive parents, alumni birthparents of APO, and by United Way funds. We also seek grant money from other organizations.

The desired outcome of our support services is to see healthy babies born and to see them raised by stable, mature Christian parents (whether that is by the birthparents or by adoptive parents.) We in no way want to pressure a girl to place her child for adoption. Charitable community support helps us avoid financial pitfalls that might cause us to feel the pressure of having a certain number of placements to keep the agency afloat.

We do not accept charitable donations from families waiting to adopt a child.

Once an adoption is finalized, we welcome contributions from our alumni!!

Birthparent Preparation and Education

We feel that educating and preparing the *birth parents* for adoption is the highest service we offer to *adoptive families*. As we guide birth families in exploring their own values and as we point them to Jesus Christ, we also teach them the truths about adoption and do our best to dispel myths. Birthparents who are more prepared are more likely to make decisions they will stand by.

Post Placement Services

Our program has enduring obligations to the people we serve. We enjoy offering these services because, among other factors, it is the right thing to do. Importantly, we learn for the future by gathering feedback from the past. To be sure that fees do not deter our extended adoptive family from returning for assistance, these services are offered free of charge.

Commitment to Excellence

This is not an average program. We desire to be on the leading edge of progress in the field of adoption. Most of the participants in the program revel in this commitment and add to it. If we are to offer a state-of-the-art program, there are expenses related to research and continuing education that must be covered.

Public Awareness Expenses

Times change dramatically in the world of adoption. There is ferocious pressure on women to either abort or to single parent their child. APO must be proactive and bring the positive message of adoption to the general public. This dimension of the agency's work brings added financial challenges.

Transparency

The hallmark of our program is candor, and we want this quality to shine through every aspect of the process. Certainly, this applies to our handling of money. If you have questions, by all means ask. If you have suggestions, by all means offer them. We sincerely believe that the participants of our constituency will enhance the efficiency and quality of our services.

Fee Structure

*fees subject to change

<p>1. Education Fees</p> <p>Information Initial call Internet access to informational packet Two-hour group informational meeting</p> <p>Pre-Application Adoption Education Fee is per couple Includes 12 hours of group meeting One two-hour intake session. If intake session is conducted outside of Bryan/College Station, mileage will be added to this cost.</p>	<p>\$350.00 \$0.00</p> <p>\$350.00</p>
<p>2. Home Study Fees</p> <p>a) Initial Home Study For families living outside of Bryan/College Station, the cost of mileage will be added to this fee.</p> <p>b) Home Study Update The Texas Health and Human Services Commission requires that a home study be updated every 12 months or when there is a major life change in the family. Mileage will be charged to those living outside the Bryan/College Station city limits. Many APO families require at least one update.</p>	<p>\$1,650.00 \$1,300.00</p> <p>\$350.00</p>
<p>3. Online Adoption Profile</p> <p>This fee will be billed with your home study. Once payment has been received, your family will be given access to create the online profile/profile book.</p>	<p>\$700.00</p>
<p>4. Agency Adoption Fees¹</p> <p>a) Preparation and Education Services Birthparent Adoption Counseling Education Literature Professional oversight of agency by Licensed Administrator and Child Placement Manager Public Relations (advertising, cultivating referral sources, promoting adoption in the community, presentations to classes, media work, etc.) Research and Continuing Education Support Groups</p> <p>b) Agency Overhead Expenses Rent, utilities, insurance, office supplies, copying expense, postage, professional fees</p>	<p>\$17,300.00 \$6,500.00</p> <p>\$3,300.00</p>

Additional Cost: Legal Fees for Finalization of the Adoption	
Approximate Cost	
This is NOT an agency fee. It is a fee assessed by the private attorney that you choose to hire to handle the adoption finalization. Below is an example of a <u>minimal</u> fee you could expect to incur.	
Court Cost/Filing Fees	\$350.00
Family Attorney fee	\$1,000.00
Ad Litem Attorney fee	\$250.00
Total Expected Adoption Expenses: <i>(Agency & Attorney) excluding Birthparent Pass Through Expenses</i>	\$21,600.00

Fee Structure cont'd

Birthparent Pass Through Expenses

The following expenses **might** be incurred by some birth mothers and will be passed through to the adoptive family. Prospective adoptive parents tell the agency early in the process if they are able and/or willing to accept pass through expenses. The Profile Books of families who are not able to accept pass through expenses will not be shown to birth mothers who have known expenses. Additionally, an adoptive couple has the right to decline a “match” if pass through expenses exceed their budget.

Before a match is approved, the agency will inform the prospective adoptive family which pass-through expenses may be expected. The adoptive family may choose not to match with a particular birthmother if they deem pass-through expenses may exceed their budget. If pass-through expenses exceed greater than 10% of the original estimate, the agency will obtain a written acknowledgement and agreement from the adoptive family. Pass through expenses exceeding the family’s ability to meet them is a reason a family might end the engagement with the birth mother before a child is placed with them.

<p>Medical Expenses of Birthmother and Baby</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the birth mother has private insurance, the adoptive family will pay for deductibles, co-pays and costs of medicines, etc. • If the birth mother is on Medicaid, the adoptive family will incur very little if any medical expenses. • If the birth mother has no private insurance and does not qualify for Medicaid, the adoptive family will pay for the full medical costs incurred by the birthmother and baby. This is a rare occurrence. 	Varies
<p>Housing, Transportation and Living Expenses of Birthmother</p> <p>Occasionally birthmothers need help with clothing, transportation, housing, or living expenses. The agency seeks community resources to try to meet these needs. If community resources are not available for her, the agency will pay the costs of meeting her needs during pregnancy and for up to 6 weeks after delivery or until released from post-partum care by her doctor. If she follows through with an adoption plan, this cost is passed through to the adoptive family after placement.</p>	Varies

<p>Child Care or Foster Care Child care or foster care while a birthmother is hospitalized or unable to care for her children. This is a rare occurrence.</p> <p><i>*These expenses are payable after placement. Total due before finalization of adoption.</i></p>	<p>Varies</p>
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Payment Policies

Education Fees

Education Fees are due prior to Pre-Application Adoption Education Class. This fee is non-refundable.

Home Study Fee

The Home Study fee (plus mileage for those outside the city limits of Bryan/College Station) is payable upon completion of home study. This fee is non-refundable. You will receive a copy of the home study write up.

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission requires that the home study be updated every 12 months or when a major life change occurs in the family. The home study update fee (plus travel expenses for those living outside the Bryan/College Station city limits), is payable upon completion of the home study update. This fee is non-refundable.

If the adoptive family lives a great distance from Bryan/College Station, arrangements can be made for an independent social worker in the family’s area to perform their home study.

Online Profile Fee

The Online Profile Fee of \$700 is payable upon completion of the home study. This fee is non-refundable. Each couple will gain access to create an online profile. During this process, multiple copies of a physical profile book will be created and sent to the agency. One copy will be mailed to the adoptive family for their records.

Agency Adoption Fees

One half of the Agency Adoption Fee is due when the adoptive family is matched with the birth family. This fee is non-refundable. However, if the adoptive family does not adopt the child with whom they originally match, this fee is transferable to a future adoption.

The second half is due after the placement of the child(ren) with the adoptive family and must be paid in full before the finalization of the adoption. If a family is adopting multiples (twins, triplets, etc.), the additional fee will be applied at this time.

Staff Travel Expenses:

Related to birthparents:

- If APO counsels a birthparent who resides outside of the Bryan/College Station area, the costs for staff travel, meals, and hotel will be billed to the adoptive family. The billing will be at the current IRS rate for travel and not to exceed the current GSA rate for meals. (GSA=General Services Administration <http://www.gsa.gov>)
*This is payable only if placement occurs. *Total due before finalization.*

Related to adoptive families:

- APO staff travel to the adoptive family's home for home study visits and post placement visits occurring outside of the Bryan/College Station area will be billed to the adoptive family at the current IRS rate for travel and not to exceed the current GSA rate for meals. Travel expenses could include mileage, meals, hotel costs.
These expenses are billed and payable after the home visits have occurred.
- There is much effort expended by APO staff during the matching and hospital phases of an adoption plan. Occasionally, these efforts do not result in the placement of the child into the home of the prospective adoptive family. Regardless, staff travel expenses related to match meetings and hospital / placement activities are billed to and payable by the adoptive family for this portion of the staff's services even if adoption placement does not occur.

Payment Policy Differences for Identified Adoptions:

- The matching fee (1/2 of the Agency Adoption Fee) and the Education Fees are due and payable after APO agrees to assist in the Identified Adoption.
These fees are non-refundable even if placement does not occur.
- All agency costs expended for Staff Travel and Birthparent Pass Through Expenses as noted above are due and payable after they are incurred.
These fees are non-refundable even if placement does not occur.
- NOTE: The placement fee (1/2 of the Agency Adoption Fee) is due and payable at the time of placement.

Legal Fees for Finalization:

Finalization of an adoption can take place after the child has been in the adoptive home for at least six months. The adoptive family may finalize in Brazos County or in their home county. If the adoptive family chooses to finalize the adoption outside of Brazos County, the court must transfer the case. At times this can cause some delays in court processing and scheduling of the court date for finalization. The adoptive family contracts directly with the attorney of their

choice for the finalization and all legal fees are paid directly to the attorney handling the finalization.

Just to give an estimate of costs: Two attorneys are often used in the finalization phase. One attorney represents the adoptive family and an attorney ad litem represents the interests of the child. If finalizing in Brazos County, the fee for the adoptive family attorney and court costs are usually around \$1350.00. The attorney ad litem fee is often \$250.

Other Pertinent Information

Adoption Registries

Adoption registries were created for birth parents that want to search for their adult adopted child and for adult adopted people who want to search for their birth families. The person who wants to search submits their name and any information they have regarding the person for whom they are searching to the Central Adoption Registry. If the person for whom they are searching also submits information requesting a search, the two parties will be matched.

The Texas Department of Health-Bureau of Vital Statistics Central Adoption Registry is part of a voluntary mutual-consent registry system. It enables people who are 18 years or older to list their name on the registry to locate other family members who are also listed. This is the only registry that has the authority to request a search of sealed or confidential records necessary to substantiate a match.

Many adoption agencies in Texas also maintain an adoption registry. For more information, you may contact the Texas Department of Health-Bureau of Vital Statistics, Central Adoption registry in Austin, Texas or visit their website at <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/vs/reqproc/adoptionregistry.shtm>

Legal Guidelines in Adoption

The Texas Family Code provides the legal guidelines for adoption practices in Texas. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is the licensing body that regulates the activities of child placing agencies (adoption agencies) in the state of Texas. The HHSC has developed a set of minimum standards, based on the Texas Family Code, by which child-placing agencies must comply and formulate their policies.

Aggieland Pregnancy Outreach, Inc. has many forms that birth families and adoptive families must read and sign. These forms ensure that we have communicated information to you that meets or exceeds the guidelines of our state regulatory bodies.

Aggieland Pregnancy Outreach, Inc. contracts with an attorney who provides our legal oversight. Our attorney is well versed in the adoption law. Our attorney is responsible for the legal proceedings of terminating the birthparents' parental rights. You have the right to hire an additional attorney independent of this agency at your own expense if you wish. However, APO's attorney will maintain full responsibility for the legal proceedings of the termination phase of the adoption.

The adoption can be finalized after the child has been in the adoptive home for at least six (6) months. Before finalization, the agency remains the Managing Conservator of the child, and, by state guidelines, the agency must provide supervision of the child in the home. The family will send monthly written reports on the child's health and development to the agency and attend monthly adoptive parent support group meetings until finalization. Also, during this time, a case worker will make at least one pre-arranged visit to the home after the child has resided with the family for at least five months. Mileage will be charged for families residing outside of Bryan/College Station.

Finalization of the adoption can take place after this post-placement supervision is complete. The family may finalize in Brazos County or their home county utilizing an experienced adoption attorney for this service.

Vaccinations

According to the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) guidelines, children must be vaccinated according to the recommendations of the CDC. APO does NOT allow exemptions for strongly held beliefs against vaccinations. All children, biological or adopted, in the home of our adoptive families must be current on their vaccinations.

Legal Terminology Regarding Birthparents

Relinquishment of Parental Rights:

For the birthmother: She will sign a form called an Affidavit of Voluntary Relinquishment. This form states that she voluntarily relinquishes, or gives up, her rights to the child. This form cannot be signed until the baby is at least forty-eight (48) hours old.

For a birthfather who **is married** to the birthmother: He will also sign a form called an Affidavit of Voluntary Relinquishment. This form states that he voluntarily relinquishes, or gives up, his parental rights. This form cannot be signed until the baby is at least forty-eight (48) hours old.

Waiver of Interest:

For a birthfather who is **not married** to the birthmother, he will sign a Waiver of Interest. This form states that he is not claiming to be the father of the child, but that he waives, or gives up, any interest he may have in the child. He gives up any parental right to or responsibility for the child. Once he signs this form, his rights to the child are terminated. He may sign this form any time before or after the birth of the child.

Termination of Parental Rights:

If terminating to a licensed adoption agency, the birthparents rights are terminated as soon as he/she signs either the Affidavit of Voluntary Relinquishment or Affidavit of Waiver of Interest. After a birthmother and birthfather sign the above forms stating that they wish to relinquish their parental rights, those parental rights are thereby "terminated." They no longer have any right to or responsibility for the child. This now enables, or frees, the child to be adopted.

If birthparents sign relinquishment papers using the services of an independent attorney instead of a licensed adoption agency, there is a window of time where the birthparents can “change their minds” and revoke their affidavits.

Affidavit of Status:

For a *birthmother* who is not married to the birthfather, she will fill out a form called an Affidavit of Status. On this form, she will declare who she believes to be the father or potential fathers of the child. If she does not know the name or whereabouts of the birthfather, she can designate the birthfather as “unknown.”

Designating the father as “unknown”:

If a birthmother designates the birthfather as “unknown,” the agency will, with all due diligence, search for the birthfather. Included in this search will be a search of the Paternity Registry to determine if any man has registered as a potential father of the child.

Paternity Registry Requirements:

The purpose of the Paternity Registry is to permit a man alleging to be the biological father of a child to assert his parentage, independent of the mother, and to preserve his rights as a parent. If a man wishes to file a notice of intent to claim paternity of a child, he must do so within 30 days of the date of the birth of the child.

For more information, contact the Paternity Registry at:

Paternity Registry
Vital Statistics Unit – 1966
Texas Department of State Health Services
P.O. Box 149347
Austin, Texas 78714-9347
Toll Free #: 1-888-963-7111 Ext. 7782
<http://www.dshs.texas.gov/vs/patreg>

Request for Address of Grievance

Qualifying and preparing for adoption can be a complicated and an emotionally draining experience. Although our program strives to empower people to make decisions for themselves, there are still many ways in which our clients depend on workers for support and direction. This dependence means that all participants in our program inevitably experience some degree of vulnerability. As a safeguard against potential mistreatment, we offer a grievance process.

Although it is not always possible for workers to accommodate or concur with the wishes of clients, we believe our clients are entitled to reasonable explanations of decisions made within the program. We believe the people we serve have the right to express their concerns.

If you feel you have, in some manner, been mistreated by someone connected with AggieLand Pregnancy Outreach, Inc. or have concerns about particular policies of the program, it is appropriate for

you to bring your concerns to the attention of your adoption worker. If that does not relieve your concern, you may bring your issue to the attention of the Agency Director by mailing your concerns to the following address:

Director
Aggieland Pregnancy Outreach, Inc.
410 Harvey Road
Suite 300
College Station, TX 77840

Please include the following information in your letter: Your name, address, email address, and telephone. The name of your case worker, the nature of your concern and your suggestions for remedy of the situation.

The agency director (or designated agent) will respond to your written concern within 7 days. If this does not resolve the issue, you may request that the Board of Directors review the situation by sending a written appeal request to the Board. You will receive a written response within 60 working days. By contacting the agency, the current name and address of the Chairman of the Board will be provided. Any client may contact the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services with a complaint or grievance against this agency.

Summary of Services for Adoptive Families

Aggieland Pregnancy Outreach, Inc. provides adoption services to families who meet the screening requirements of the agency. The following services are available to couples seeking to build their family through adoption:

- Pre-adoption training through the Information Meeting and Pre-Application Adoption Education Classes
- Home studies and home study updates
- Facilitation of the adoptive family's relationship with the birthparent(s)
- Adoptive Family Support Group meetings are open to:
 - those who are approved by the agency and are awaiting adoptive placement,
 - to those in post-placement supervision, and/or
 - to those whose adoptions have been finalized
- Post adoption services to include:
 - Post-placement supervision
 - Ongoing counseling available to assist with:
 - Attachment
 - Understanding birthparent(s) grief
 - Facilitating relationships with birth family
 - Assisting with adoption issues of the adoptive parents, child or siblings

Clarifications and Covenants

We provide opportunities, not children.
The timetable is completely unclear.
The risk of taking home a child before the termination
of parental rights is enormous, beyond description really.
We cannot predict the behavior of birthparents.
We cannot predict how the children will “turn out. “
We cannot predict our own future.
We cannot control the “adoption scene.”

Our Covenant with Clients

We will:

- Be candid in all things.
- Honor client participation in the process.
- Stay contemporary.
- Handle finances prudently.
- Take continuing interest in our families.

We expect:

- Candor in all things.
- Commitments to the birth families to be honored.
- Disappointments handled with dignity and grace.
- Constructive feedback.
- Continuing interest in the program.
- Trust in God’s sovereignty.
- A whole hearted, exclusive, two-year commitment to our adoption program.

Now What?

If, after reading APO’s Information Packet, you feel you meet APO’s basic eligibility requirements, we invite you to attend the next Informational Meeting. We enjoy the opportunity of meeting you face to face and telling you all about APO. The information meetings will be held approximately every 2 months. These meetings initiate a new intake process for a group of prospective adoptive families. The next step, the pre-application seminar, generally occurs 1- 2 times per year and more if needed. Scheduling the pre-application seminar is based solely on our need to increase our existing pool of waiting to adopt families.

Your next step is to complete an information questionnaire that we call a “Fact Sheet.” It simply tells us some facts about you. By submitting this form, you tell us that you would like to be notified of the date of our next Informational Meeting.

Proceed to Fact Sheet

https://aggieland.mysamdb.com/SAM/Fm/ProspectiveAdoptiveParentsFactSheet_Edt.aspx

Please send an email to Katie@PregnancyOutreach.org if you have difficulties with the Fact Sheet.

Credits

Much of the information contained in this packet was adapted from
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