

Policy on Post-Adoption Services and Search Request

Intent: The post-adoption search policy is to identify what information is available in a search request, New Beginnings' responsibilities in a search request, and confidentiality requirements.

Policy: Upon request and if available, adoptive applicants, birth parents, and adult adoptees (18 years of age or older) can request information about their adoption. An Authorized Person can also request and receive information on an adoption (see below on who is an authorized person). The information available upon request must be non-identifying and can include the following: age, circumstances surrounding the placement, religion, education, nationality, employment history, medical history, talent, or hobbies. New Beginnings' staff should consider if the information released could easily lead to the identification of the individual. If so, the information should be limited or omitted.

At intake, the person making the request must fill out an application. Upon receipt, New Beginnings must provide a handbook or make the types of post-adoption services available online, including searches, confidentiality requirements, and fees and expenses for services. The information should outline reasonable expectations for a search. During the intake process, the person making the request must verify their identity, such as a copy of their driver's license or passport.

New Beginnings staff is available to counsel the individual making the request. If the person has difficulty in a personal or social adjustment related to the adoption, New Beginnings should recommend outside resources.

Our confidentiality requirements are that No Identifying Information is to be released without that person's written permission. For example, to release the birth mother's name requires her written permission. Without a release, confidentiality also includes not verifying the birth parents' identity, even though the adoptive parents may have learned of the identity of the birth parents before or after the adoption plan was made. In addition, we do not verify the child or adoptive family identity even if the birth parents learned of the identity before or after the adoption was made.

Authorized persons are: State personnel representing child abuse or neglect investigation, or otherwise authorized by statute; office of licensing or agency authorization; Staff members of other agencies acting within the scope of their employment; representative of adopting agencies, social welfare, or law enforcement exchanging information individuals in the care or legal custody of one of the agencies; persons named in a court order; bona fide researcher who has received permission from the commissioner or designee and have agreed to maintain the confidentiality of the information.

New Beginnings staff who can determine the information to be released and provide post-adoption counseling are the Director of Social Services and the Program Director. New Beginnings' staff should have available information on community resources, such as counseling services, support groups, adoption registries, and other sources of information that may be useful.

New Beginnings shall maintain a file documenting the search requests and the actions taken for that request.

The Executive Director can make reasonable modifications to this policy without prior board approval. For clarification of the policy and requirements, see NJ Manual of Requirements for Adoption Agencies, Chapter 50-5.9 Post-adoption services, pages 77-79.