**Facts About Access to Original Birth Certificates**

You might have some questions about restoring the right of adult adoptees to access their original birth certificates. Here’s some information to get you started:

**1.**[**Biological heritage matters**](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/#HumanRight)**.**

It is morally and ethically [wrong](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/#HumanRight) for the State to deprive a human being of access to their biological heritage.

There is no substitute for the truth, particularly the truth about oneself. The truth is that adoptees have two heritages, two identities, two families and two ancestries. It serves no one, least of all adoptees themselves, to pretend this isn’t true.

**2. The law discriminates against adult adoptees solely because they are adopted.**

Every non-adopted adult citizen of Connecticut has the right to receive a copy of their true, original, true birth certificate. Yet the State denies this right to adult adoptees, forever, simply because they are adopted. That’s called discrimination, and it’s wrong.

**3. Adoptees are deprived of the ability to obtain current, updated medical information that is crucial to their health.**

Adult adoptees walk into a doctor’s office and have to write “I don’t know” in the medical history section of the intake form. Increasingly we know that having accurate information about [your medical history is crucial to staying healthy](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/#Medical). A history of breast or colon cancer, heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure or cholesterol, impacts decisions made today about tests and treatment. Any medical information that may be contained in an adoptee’s file is at least two decades old, and often incomplete or non-existent.

**4. There aren’t any effective substitutes for the right of access to a true, original birth certificate.**

The point of access to original birth certificates isn’t search and reunion, although some adoptees will use the information that way. However, if the point were search and reunion, intermediary systems and reunion registries don’t work.

Many adoptees won’t use these systems because they are so humiliating and degrading. Can you imagine having to approach a social worker, pay a search fee of up to several hundred dollars, and possibly submit to counseling (!) to get a copy of your birth certificate?  And many birth mothers won’t use them because they believe they don’t have the right.

For a variety of reasons, reunion registries have [an abysmal success rate (~2%).](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/#Substitutes) They require both people to be searching, both people to be alive, and both people to be aware of their existence. “The stars have to align” perfectly, and of course they often don’t.

**5. Adoptees have proved themselves to be extraordinarily sensitive to the possible concerns of their birth parents.**

Other states and countries that have enacted retroactive OBC access laws report [a complete lack of “horror stories”](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/#HorrorStories), and “extraordinary compliance” with biological parents preferences regarding contact. “None of the dangers people had feared – that their privacy would be invaded and their families destroyed – had materialized.”

**About Birthparents**

(**Note**: Birth/first parents, and particularly birth/first mothers, are the object of much misinformation and negative stereotyping in our society. We have volunteer birth/first parents who would be happy to answer your questions personally.)

**1. The vast majority of birth/first mothers want contact with their adult offspring.**

A great deal of research shows that the [vast majority of birth/first mothers, (90-95%) want at least some contact with their adult offspring](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/#Majority). In states which have enacted access laws with Contact Preference Forms, for example, less than 1% of forms filed indicate a preference for no contact. Organizations conducting searches for adoptees under other state’s laws, such as New Jersey, report that 95% of birth/first mothers consent to at least some contact.

**2. Birth/first parents who don’t want contact don’t have to have it.**

The [bill](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/the-bill) proposed by Access provides a system for birth/first parents to file a [Contact Preference Form (used successfully in other states)](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/#ContactPreference) which provides them with the following options:

* I would like to be contacted;
* I would prefer to be contacted only through an intermediary; or
* I prefer not to be contacted at this time.

We have a right to freedom of association in this country. Birth/first parents who do not wish to have contact do not have to have it. They can just say “no”. They are adults after all, and due to biological realities birth/first parents are at least in their thirties (and more likely much older).  Adoptees have been searching for and finding their birth/first parents for years (especially since the advent of the internet) and the tiny percentage of birth/first parents who don’t want contact can say “no”.

**3. Adoptees and birth/first parents are natural allies, not natural enemies.**

Adult adoptees are not, as a group, stalkers, idiots or insensitive louts. Adoptees instead tend to be quite sensitive to the possible concerns of their birth/first parents. Several states and, in fact, entire countries that have restored access report this is their experience. Remember that birth/first parents are adoptee’s blood relatives. [We’re not out to hurt them](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/#NaturalAllies).

**4. For the past thirty years in Connecticut, every birth/first parent has signed a sworn Affidavit stating that they know their identities could be discovered by their adult offspring.**

Since 1983 every birth/first parent in Connecticut has signed a sworn Affidavit of Consent to Termination of Parental Rights that states, in part, “I am aware that the child, upon reaching his eighteenth birthday, may have the right to information which may identify me or other blood relatives.”

[Affidavit for Consent to Termination of Parental Rights, CT Form JD-JM-60 Rev. 7-11](http://accessconnecticut.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/NEWIMG_00011.pdf)

**5. At all times prior 1974, Connecticut law allowed adult adoptees over the age of 18 to access their original birth certificate.**

The law was explicit and clear. In fact, many adoption agencies provided the adoptive parents with the child’s birth name on documents such as placement agreements and adoption decrees. So prior to 1974 any social worker or adoption agency who told a birth/first mother that her child would never know her identity was misinforming her about the law.

**6. Complete birth/first parent anonymity is an illusion under Connecticut law.**

Connecticut Probate Courts may order that the OBC be disclosed to adult adoptees, [without notice](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/#Anonymity) to the birth/first parents.

**7. Birth/first parents have had many years to prepare for the possibility that their adult offspring may seek contact.**

You cannot live in modern society without reading a news article or seeing a television show portraying an adoptee search and reunion story. The media love these stories, probably because they touch such a basic human need for people to be connected to family and blood. As such, they are very popular.

Birth/first parents are people who live in society, too. Many birth/first parents actually choose to search. And since access is only available to adult adoptees, birth/first parents have had at least two decades to prepare for, think about, and plan for the possibility of contact from their offspring. They are not frightened teenagers any more. They are [mature adults](http://www.cubirthparents.org/index.php).

**7.  Many birth/first mothers were banished and shamed into relinquishing their children.**

The small percentage of birth/first mothers who prefer no contact almost always do so as a result of the trauma they endured at the hands of society and their families.

The sad truth is that many birth/first mothers [weren’t “promised privacy”](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/#Privacy) but were shamed, banished and forced to relinquish their babies. It is a disgraceful part of United States history that during the “[Baby Scoop Era](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baby_Scoop_Era)” (1945-1970s) many unmarried women were subject to forceful and degrading tactics to convince them to surrender their children. Ann Fessler in her moving book [The Girls Who Went Away](http://thegirlswhowentaway.com/), the tactics of the [Baby Scoop Era](http://babyscoopera.com/).

And the fact that birth/first mothers (and pretty much all people, for that matter) want privacy from the public regarding their personal affairs, does not mean they want anonymity from their adult offspring. There are plenty of things you don’t want on the front page of the Hartford Courant that it’s okay for your family to know.

We as a state and a society aren’t breaking promises, but awakening to the collective damage inflicted upon a generation of unmarried, pregnant women. In March, 2013 Australian Prime Minister Australia Julia Gillard issued a [national apology](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/mar/22/julia-gillard-adoption-apology)to birth/first mothers for practices of [forced adoption](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/#Privacy) in that country during the Baby Scoop Era.

[Today well over 90% of adoption arrangements involve at least some openness and contact between birth and adoptive families](http://accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/#Openness).  This speaks to the psychological and cultural awareness that an adoptee’s knowledge of biological origins promotes the well-being of all parties involved, independent of the issue of their legal right to this knowledge when they become adults.

**Not one surrender document has ever been produced that indicates that birth/first parents were “promised privacy” in Connecticut.**

**About Adoptive Parents…**

**1. Adoptees and adoptive parents are natural allies, not natural enemies.**

Again please remember that adult adoptees are not, as a group, idiots or insensitive louts. Adoptees instead tend to be quite sensitive to the possible concerns of their adoptive parents. [Remember adoptive parents are the adoptee’s family, and people tend to care about their families.](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/#NaturalAllies)

An adult adoptee seeking his OBC is looking for their own history and identity, [not rejecting](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/#Openness) their adoptive parents.

**2. Most adoptive parents support adult adoptee access.**

Most parents want what is best for their children. This is true even after the child grows into an adult. And adoptive parents are parents.  This recent [survey in New York State of over 1200 adoptive parents](http://www.accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/#Openness) found that the majority supported adult adoptee access to their original birth certificates (including retroactive access).

Want to learn even more? [Go to our research page](http://accessconnecticut.org/research-facts/).