

All About Adoption Agencies

When looking to adopt, one faces the decision of whether to use an agency. This is not a simple decision, as agencies provide many support services to ease the process, but they can also be costly. Plus, it raises even more questions: Where can I find an agency near me? How do I know if the agency is reputable? Do I choose a public or private agency? This article aims to answer some of these questions, or at least aide in finding the answers.

First of all, there are two types of adoption agencies-- public and private. A public agency is run by the government (either state or regional) and supported by public monies. These agencies generally assist in the adoption of foster care youth. Private adoptions agencies, on the other hand are run by a private entity. They are licensed by the state in which they operate, but are funded privately. These agencies can be of assistance in all types of adoptions.

A major advantage of using an adoption agency is that they do all of the "searching" for you. They will do the work of finding and matching a child to you, based on specified criteria. Support options are also generally available through adoption agencies, especially private ones. These services include counseling, referrals, and both pre- and post-adoption education. The downside to all of this is, of course, cost. It is estimated that an adoption can cost from \$5,000 to \$40,000.

Adoption costs money, there's no doubt about that. However, when beginning the adoption process, you may encounter certain costs which should raise red flags. For instance, beware of any agency which requires payment of fees immediately after application. There will usually be a small fee up front, but otherwise proceed with caution. Do not deal with any agency that feels or has been reported to be disreputable.

That being said, ask about costs upfront. There may be a sliding scale, and there are resources that exist to defray the costs of the adoption process.

Another factor to consider is any specific focus which you would like the agency to take. Some agencies, for example, specialize only in placing bi-racial children, while others focus solely on children with special needs. Be sure to ask about any such emphasis before choosing an agency.

Of course, before you can begin doing all of this, you must locate an agency in your area. Adoption.com maintains an online directory of adoption agencies across the United States, as well as in Canada and the United Kingdom. Here you can browse the clickable map, or search by state, category and agency name.

There is also the option of selecting a country to adopt from internationally. The directory is available online at <http://directory.adoption.com>.

This, of course, only answers a few of the myriad questions that people face when deciding to adopt. Prospective adoptive parents are encouraged to do as much research and ask as many questions as possible before beginning the adoption process. It can be a tedium of red tape, but in the end it is worth the struggle, and knowing the length of the struggle beforehand can make it that much easier.