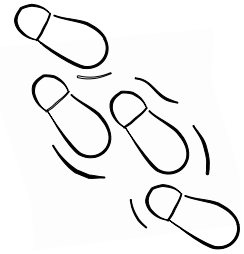


### **FINAL STEPS... AS YOU MOVE TOWARD FINALIZATION**



#### ✓ **Seek Out The Information You Need**

Ask for a **disclosure meeting** with your caseworker. You can ask for this after the home study has been completed and you have been approved for adoption of a specific child. At this disclosure meeting, ask for:

**Client History Profile.** This is a letter that contains a listing of everything that Medicaid ever paid for, the doctors the child saw, the treatment received and the dates. This will give you a more comprehensive understanding of this child's medical history. Of course, it will contain only the treatment paid for by Medicaid.

**History of the child and family history from the case file.** Some of this may be withheld because of confidentiality on the birth parents part, but the information about the child should be made available.

Ask for a **Signed Release of Information or ROI** from the caseworker to get information from schools and medical personnel.

Ask your caseworker about how to **get mental health records** and a release to talk with the therapist. You may need to get a **Signed Release of Information (ROI)** from the Guardian ad Litem or the caseworker may need to seek the release.

#### ✓ **Hire An Adoption Attorney**

- Hire an adoption attorney to assist with the finalization. You have a copy of the Adoption Attorney list in your folder or you can look in phone book for other contacts. **NOTE:** *Consulting an adoption attorney is sometimes helpful earlier in the adoption process to review the relinquishment agreement if applicable or with subsidy negotiations but OCS may not reimburse for those kinds of legal expenses.*
- Attorney's fees, court costs, home study fees, transportation costs, and other expenses directly related to the adoption may be reimbursable up to \$2,000 after the adoption is finalized.
- Usually, your attorney will send a bill and the legal decree to Central Office. Reimbursement will be sent to you unless prearranged to go directly to the attorney.

#### ✓ **Attend Court Hearing**

The adoption hearing is the final court proceeding and varies from community to community. It is a joyous occasion so plan to make it fun. It is usually brief, with the main parties present and informal, so you can invite friends and family (and of course, all the children) and cameras and video recorders are usually allowed. It is a time to celebrate because the child is now legally a member of your family!

✓ **Details After The Finalization**

- If your child has a social security number, contact the Social Security Administration to change information on SSI card, such as a name change
- Notify schools and health care provider regarding new status of your child.
- The caseworker needs to apply for the release of the Permanent Fund Dividend which are held in trust. Depending on what your attorney requested in the adoption, the child's PFD will either continue to be held in trust until the child turns 18 years of age, or released to the adoptive parent.

✓ **Celebrate!**

Adoption is a day of celebration, as important as the birth of a new baby, so create a Family Ceremony that will allow you to acknowledge the past (how the child came to you) and embrace the future (the claiming of a child as your own.) Some families celebrate the day the adoption became final as well as the child's connection to their family.

✓ **Prepare For The Ongoing Journey**

Even though this is a joyful event, prepare for escalation of behaviors. Children may have many mixed feelings or may feel the stress and tension of the process or have feelings of loss, denial and grief mixed in with feelings of relief, joy and happiness. It is not uncommon that children's behavior starts to escalate in the month immediately preceding the official adoption. So prepare for it, take care of yourself and see the behaviors not as a rejection of you but a reflection of the child's inner struggles as he adapts.

✓ **Seek Out The Resources You Need For Yourself And Your Family.**

Also remember, as your child's need change, so may yours. Seek out assistance as needed, whether it be counseling, parenting classes or parent-to-parent support. Try to seek out professionals or resources that have a thorough understanding of adoption issues and attachment issues, as well as any special needs your child has.