



*Executive Director*  
Tara E. Gutterman, Esquire

*Social Worker Supervisor*  
Amitha Krishnamurthi, MSW

Dear Prospective Adoptive Parent:

Thank you so much for contacting us and inquiring about our adoption program. We are delighted to hear of your interest in children and hope that soon you will be "On Board the ARC" with us!

We have enclosed a number of materials to assist you in getting better acquainted with us. Please read them carefully and call us if you have any questions.

We have also enclosed an application form if you are ready to begin right away!

We try hard to be a "user friendly" agency, and we always welcome your questions or comments. If you would like an appointment to discuss these things personally, we are happy to do that as well.

Again, thank you for your interest and we sincerely hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tara E. Gutterman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tara Gutterman, Esq.  
Executive Director Enclosures

## 20 Questions About Adoption

1. Doesn't it take a long time to adopt? It doesn't have to! There are many children in need of permanent homes and Adoption ARC will work diligently to see that children are placed as quickly as possible. This includes helping expedite your end of the process.
2. Don't I need a lot of money? No! What you need most is *a*. sincere commitment. to a child. Financially, you need to be stable and manage well with what resources you do have, but you do not need a lot of money.
3. But I need to own my own home, right? Again, NO! You can own, rent or live with your in-laws! We just need to see that you have a stable and safe environment for the child you will adopt.
4. OK - what if I am single? No problem! There are many children in need of homes. Adoption ARC will place with couples and singles without - discrimination.
5. I'm a little older than some parents. Again, no problem.
6. Isn't there a lot of paperwork and hassle in adoption? A certain amount of paperwork, yes. But Adoption ARC's staff -will work with you to take out the hassle we want to be your partners in this process!
7. I work and daytime appointments? No problem! Our staff will work out convenient times with you.
8. What is a homestudy? The first official step in your Adoption process. An educational opportunity for you to learn about adoption, while 'the agency gets to know you better. It results in a document, the "Homestudy" that is used to help match you with your child..
9. Can I choose the child I will adopt? Adoption ARC will work with you to make a "match" with is comfortable for you, the child and the birth family.
10. Are there babies to adopt? YES! Many babies , need homes!
11. Can someone take my child away ones I have adopted? Once the adoption is .final, NO.
12. What is "Open Adoption?" Open adoption describes any type of adoption plan that for contact between fee child, birth family and adoptive family. The openness can be in the form of letters and pictures through the agency or direct person to person contact and visits depending on the comfort level and desires of all involved. Openness in adoption allows the birth family to have the peace of mind of knowing that their child is safe and healthy. It allows children to remain connected to their "roots." It allows adoptive parents to have all the information they need to be effective.
13. But confidentiality is important to me.. Adoption ARC will always respect your confidentiality.
14. How is adoption different than foster care? Foster care is meant to be temporary. Adoption is permanent-" A Forever Family" for a child. Your child to raise just as if born to you.
15. How much will I learn about the background of the child I adopt? Adoption ARC will make every effort to obtain all information available and will share everything .we know" with you!

16. Do all the children in need of homes have special needs? NO. There are many children in need of adoption who do not have any other special need beyond the need for a family. And, there are also many children' with a variety of special needs who' also need families now!

17. I think I'd like to adopt a child with special needs, but I am not sure Adoption ARC offers many educational classes to help you decide the type, of adoption that is best for you.

18. What about after I adopt? Adoption ARC provides a lifetime support program with consultation, classes, newsletters, support groups, social events and other ways to keep your family strong.

19. How can I be sure you really understand my needs? ARC Staff has years of experience and many of us are adoptive parents.

20. So how do I start? Call ARC today .at 215-844-1082.

## Adoptive Parents File Checklist

- \_\_\_\_\_ Application
- \_\_\_\_\_ Photographs of applicants, \_\_\_\_\_ Dear Birth mother Letter
- \_\_\_\_\_ Homestudy Report, \_\_\_\_\_ Homestudy Updates (if applicable)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reference Letters (3-5) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Medical Reports on applicant(s) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Medical Reports on all household members
- \_\_\_\_\_ Financial Statement & Last Tax Return .
- \_\_\_\_\_ Employment Verification \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Marriage License (if applicable)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Divorce decree (if applicable)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Certificates of applicant(s) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Certificate(s) or Adoption Decrees of applicant's child(ren) .
- \_\_\_\_\_ Proof of Life Insurance, \_\_\_\_\_ Proof of Health Insurance
- \_\_\_\_\_ Child Abuse clearances on applicant(s)
  - a) PA \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) NJ \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Child Abuse clearances on all adult household members (if applicable)
  - a) PA \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) NJ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Criminal clearances on applicant(s)
  - a) PA \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) NJ \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Criminal clearances on all adult household members (if applicable)
  - a) PA \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) NJ \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ FBI clearances
- \_\_\_\_\_ Certificate of Good Conduct on applicant(s) (International ONLY)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Transracial Questionnaire (if applicable)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Release of Homestudy to other agencies (if applicable)

## **New Jersey Legal Outline - by Tara E. Gutterman, Esquire**

Because we have our New Jersey license and cases, I decided to do a "quickie" legal outline for your information. Remember, this is very basic, so please call with any questions.

1. A birth parent in New Jersey contacts ARC, and counseling options begins with the client. ARC is licensed to provide adoption services in the state of New Jersey. The regulations require an agency to perform three in-person counseling sessions with the birth parent, or else a waiver of these services must be signed by the birth parent.

2. At the time of birth, ARC reviews counseling and if the birth parents choose adoption, a final surrender to the agency is taken at 72 hours after birth. Usually, the hospital will keep the baby for discharge until that time.

a. The surrender taken in New Jersey is **irrevocable** which means it is **final**. The birth parents must both sign the surrender for this to be considered free of all legal risk.

b. If a birth father is known, but refuses to surrender, the agency must notify the father in writing of the adoption plan and his duty to assert his rights. He has twenty days to do so if he is a New Jersey resident. If he fails to assert a claim of paternity, he waives all rights to be notified of any further proceedings.

c. If the birth father's address is unknown, the agency must perform a diligent search to find him through the Department of Public Welfare, the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Department of Voter Registration.

3. At the time the baby is discharged, you may come for the placement but must remain in the state until the Interstate Compact is performed. (This usually takes five business days).

4. When you return home, you must have post-placement supervision. New Jersey law requires the first post-placement to be performed fourteen days after placement. You must then have a visit every other month until the adoption is finalized.

5. The adoption may not be finalized before six and one half months and the completion of four reports, (if you finalize in New Jersey or any other state other than Pennsylvania). If you choose to finalize anywhere other than New Jersey or Pennsylvania, you must obtain your own attorney at your own expense. If you finalize in Pennsylvania, you need three post-placement reports within six months and you need not obtain a separate attorney.

6. Please see steps for finalization and glossary of terms on Pennsylvania legal outline.

## READINESS FOR TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

**Adoptive Parent(s):**

**Date:**

Please respond individually to the following questions on separate paper:

1. Once you adopt transracially, you become an interracial family forever. What does this mean to you?
2. How does your extended family feel about persons of color?
3. Describe your current personal links and connections with the African American community in your neighborhood, workplace, network of friends, social life, church, etc.
4. How will you expand upon these links and connections?
5. What do you anticipate will be the greatest challenges your child will face as\_ a non-white child with white parents? How do you plan to prepare for and help your child cope with these challenges?
6. What resources do you anticipate you will need to be better equipped to parent a child of color? What provisions have you made to locate and obtain these resources?
7. What benefits and advantages do you enjoy in this society due to your membership in the majority race that members of minority races and cultures do not enjoy?
8. What stereotypes or prejudices are you personally aware of that you have? How did these come about? What have you done to "check out" the basis of these? How do these prejudices affect your life and decision making?
9. Would you have dated a person of color? Would you have married a person of color? Why or why not?
10. What feelings do you have about these questions or about the issues of transracial adoption that you would like to add?

## CONSIDERING BUILDING YOUR FAMILY THROUGH ADOPTION?

### SERVICES AVAILABLE AT ADOPTION ARC:

#### \* **Orientation & Personalized Adoption Consultation**

A sensitive, caring and experienced adoption counselor will help you think through all the options, issues and decisions ahead on your adoption journey and assess *if* adoption is right for you and if so what type best fits your family.

#### \* **Adoption Home Study Services & Post Adoption Supervision**

Homestudies and post-placement services conducted in a co-operative, timely professional & confidential manner.

#### \* **Intensive Outreach Program**

Some families may wish to participate in a program that makes intensive efforts to extend agency outreach to birth families seeking to make adoption plans for their children.

#### \* **Adoptive Placement Services**

Once your homestudy and pre-adoption preparation is completed, we will work to match you with a birth family and an infant or child. Together we will work to insure a match that "fits" well so that everyone's needs are future.

#### \* **Legal Services**

From the termination of the birth parents rights, through to the finalization of the adoption, ARC's legal staff handles your legal needs with professionalism, efficiency and ethical expertise.

#### \* **Adoption & Parenting Skill Building**

ARC's classes in general parenting skills, adoption issues, special needs parenting and cultural sensitivity have received national endorsements

#### \* **Facilitation of Openness in Adoption**

ARC will provide assistance in creating and maintaining relationships with your child's birth family if you so desire.

#### \* **Lifelong Support Services**

From newsletters & parties, to counseling and crisis intervention over the years, ARC will always be there for you and your family due to our belief that *Adoption is truly a lifelong process!*

## SO WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE LIKE?

By Amitha Krishnamurthi, MSW

There could be several phases in the adoption process for adoptive parents. This is a small list I have compiled but I am sure many of you would have more questions and more specific issues in your own adoption processes. What I would like to do in this space is to walk you through the actual adoption process as most parents go through.

Having made the decision to adopt a child you must first acknowledge the fact that you are unable to have a child biologically? This maybe true for some and so it is coming to the realization that you need a child to call your own and the only way you could do it is by adopting one, baring the medical possibilities of invitro fertilization and surrogacy. Many parents feel like adopting a child although they have some biological children Some grapple with the thought of parenting a child out of one's bloodline. How will my parents react to my adopted child? How will my family treat the child? When you are through these two , you might wonder what type of adoption would be best suited for you. Open adoption could have its merits and demerits...likewise with a closed adoption. But essentially it comes down to what *you* are comfortable with. We practice openness in adoption where the confidential material regarding you and the birth family is not divulged to either of the two. Meetings would be arranged in the ARC office. If you agree to mailing pictures and letters to the birth family, it would be done through the agency. But then what is it that *you* can handle? That's what it is all about.

If you are reading this, you have sorted through these three stages, and have decided to adopt! Congratulations! Let's talk about the homestudy process. You are accepting of the Social Worker who comes into your home and has a right to know ALL about you. It is a chance for you to rediscover the joys of your childhood & your family life. It might be difficult to open up to public scrutiny. How fair is it that you need social validation of your parenting competence when so many others do not have to go through all this to have a baby? Actually many birth parents tell me that it is likewise for them! So you aren't' really alone in this! How long is the wait going to be? What would the birth family think about us when they look at our profile? These will be the emotional issues you would be dealing with at this stage.

### Phase 1:

Well now is the actual adoption.... the day you are going to be bringing the baby home with you. You are excited, happy, nervous, overwhelmed.....how is it going to be to accept a new member into your home? You will need to adjust with the "ghosts" of the biological family as part of your family. You will have to deal with the attitudes of friends and community towards the adoption. How is the extended family going to react to the non-biological child?

Your baby is growing up so fast..... if you are having an open adopting, you might want to mail pictures to the birth family about important developmental milestones, on birthdays and holidays.

### Phase 2:

Before you know it, your child is now of school-going age, how will you deal with your child's wish/fear of contacting the biological family? How are you going to prepare your child for those times when he/she will be part of a class activity of doing a family tree? When are you going to reveal to your child that he/she is adopted? Will the child have dual loyalties-wanting to stay with you and wanting to go back to the biological family? This is the time when you acknowledge that you are a family which interacts with a wider community.

### Phase 3:

Your little child enters adolescence. This probably when the "Who am I?" question is going to crop up. You need to understand the difference between triadic families. You are not just parent and child, you have a biological family, an adoptive family and a child. Your child is going to have identity issues. You need to help him/her to understand the biological family so as to firmly establish his/her identity. You need to help your child understand the positives of adoption and how glad you are to have him/her in your life. This is probably the time when your child is most curious about the biological family. He/She wants to search for the biological family. You need to reaffirm ties within the adoptive family. You need to be at peace with the adoption in the family, as a family.

There are many resources where one could find information about the adoption process, what to accept, how to deal with the issues etc. I will try to suggest the best resources to my knowledge, here for you. Please feel free to share your resources with us. The Adoptive Families magazine is a good place to look for information. For subscriptions call 1-800-372-3300. The Alternate Families magazine is a good resource for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender parents & their children. For subscriptions call 1-800-256-8519. They are online at [www.altfammag.com](http://www.altfammag.com)

The internet is a treasure trove. The [National Adoption Clearing House](http://www.calib.co./naic) at [www.calib.co./naic](http://www.calib.co./naic) is a valuable resource. Our web site is [www.adoptionarc.com](http://www.adoptionarc.com) where you could find a lot of information about the kind of adoptions we do. A must read for every adoptive parent is the book, [Dear Birth Mother](#) by Kathleen Silber & Phylis Speedin which talks about open adoption. Special needs adoption is another angel which has been highly researched. One of our birth parents who was considering placing their child with down's syndrome told us that [Shattered Dream-Lonely Choices](#) by Joanne Finnegan was very helpful. [Family Bonds](#) by Elizabeth Bartholet talks about adoption and the politics of parenting. Joyce Marguire Pavao's [The Family of Adoption](#) presents the life of an adoptee by an adult adoptee. It might be a good resource to look to for adoptive parents to understand their child's feelings and attitudes. One of our adoptive families who have adopted trans-racially recommended this book, [The Black Parenting Book](#) by Beal, Abner & Villarosa. A good resource for adopted children to read is [Being Adopted - The Lifelong Search For Self](#) by Brodzinsky, Schechter and Henig. I have so far hoped to give you information about an adoptive parents' journey through the adopting process. Please let us know about resource you find which has helped you in understanding the adoption process, so we can add it to our growing list.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Rosenburg, E (1992). [The Adoption Life Cycle](#). New York: The Free Press

**ADOPTIVE HOME STUDY**  
**(outline)**  
**Cover Page**

**Identifying Information**

**First Applicant's Name:**  
**Date of Birth:**  
**Social Security Number:**  
**Place of Birth:**  
**Race/Ethnicity:**  
**Nationality:**  
**Occupation:**  
**Employer:**

**Salary (annually in U.S. \$):**

**Second Applicant's Name:**  
**Date of Birth:**  
**Social Security Number:**  
**Place of Birth:**  
**Race/Ethnicity:**  
**Nationality:**  
**Occupation:**  
**Employer:**

**Salary (annually in U.S. \$):**

**Date of Marriage:**                      **Place of Marriage**

**Children in the Home (names and dates of birth):**

**Present Home Address:**

**County of Residence:**                      **Years at Residence:**

**Home Phone**

**Caseworker:**

**Date of Contacts:** (at least 3 in person contacts held on separate days to conduct joint and individual interviews with all household members, including at least 1 in home visit)

**Home study Approval Date:**

### **Family Motivation to Adopt**

1. What is each adoptive applicant's awareness and sensitivity to special issues that adopted children need to resolve, including the child's identity, attitudes toward birth parents and circumstances of the child's availability for adoption?
2. What is the family's understanding of the importance of helping the child accept being adopted? How do they plan to help their child accept being adopted?
3. What are the attitudes of other members of the family and of significant other persons involved with the family towards the adoption?
4. What type of child are the applicants willing to accept? (include age range, racial or ethnic background, sex, sibling groups, and physical, social, emotional, or developmental disabilities acceptable)
5. Discuss whether post adoption counseling is offered or available and any plans the family has to participate.

### **IF APPLICABLE**

1. Knowledge of or history with special needs adoption
2. Why considering special needs adoption

### **Coping and Parenting Skills**

1. What is the emotional stability and maturity of the applicants and any adult household members?
2. How do they cope with problems, stress, frustration, crisis, and separation and loss? What is their capacity to give and receive affection? What is their ability to distinguish between their needs and those of the child? ,
3. What are their philosophies on child rearing and parental roles?
4. What is their experience with children?
5. What is their philosophy on discipline? Do they agree that corporal punishment, including hitting and shaking, as well as abusive language and ridicule, are unacceptable means of discipline?
6. What is the applicants' capacity to make viable child care arrangements while employed?

### **Marital/Family Relationships**

1. How do they interact as a family?
2. How do they communicate and make decisions?
3. What role does each spouse/partner play in the family?
4. How do they handle differences of opinion?
5. What is the adjustment of other children in the family?
6. What is the family's social, cultural and religious background?

### **Adoptive Parents Family Life History**

#### First Applicant:

1. Describe the applicant's childhood experiences.
2. What was the applicant's home life like?
3. What was his/her parents' method of discipline and handling problems?
4. What are the applicant's current family ties and relationships?
5. What are the applicant's interests and hobbies?
6. What are the applicant's strengths and weaknesses?
7. How does the applicant see himself/herself and his/her spouse/partner?
8. How is the applicant's health? Include date of most recent physical examination. What is the physician's recommendation about the applicant's capacity to be an adoptive parent?
9. Does the applicant have any birth family background problems, such as medical or hereditary problems, incest, mental illness or drug use? If so, describe.

#### Second Applicant

1. Describe the applicant's childhood experiences.
2. What was the applicant's home life like?

3. What was his/her parents' method of discipline and handling problems?
4. What are the applicant's current family ties and relationships?
5. What are the applicant's interests and hobbies?
6. What are the applicant's strengths and weaknesses?
7. How does the applicant see himself/herself and his/her spouse/partner?
8. How is the applicant's health? How is the health of any additional adult household members? Include date of most recent physical examination. What is the physician's recommendation about the applicant's capacity to be an adoptive parent?
9. Does the applicant have any birth family background problems, such as medical or hereditary problems, sexual or child abuse, domestic violence, mental illness or substance abuse? If so, describe.

#### **Marriages/Divorces**

Verify present and previous marriage(s) and divorce(s) of each adoptive applicant, including deaths of former spouses when there was no divorce.

#### **Criminal History and Child Abuse Records**

1. Have the applicants or any adult household members been arrested, indicted convicted or had any other judicial judgment or administrative action as the result of substance abuse, sexual or child abuse and/or domestic violence.
2. State the agency's assessment of the results of criminal history and child abuse records searches.
3. If there are any positive findings, document the results and discuss any rehabilitation efforts.
4. Have the applicants or any adult household member been previously rejected for adoption or received an unfavorable home study? If so, why?

#### **Home Environment**

1. What is the location and description of the physical environment of the home and neighborhood?
2. Is the home suitable to accommodate a child?

3. Does it have space meeting any applicable requirements?

### **Financial Resources**

1. State the family's income and financial resources such as bank accounts, investments, retirement accounts, etc. Include a copy of the latest federal tax return.
2. State the family's financial obligations such as mortgage/rent payments, car payments, credit card debt, loans, etc.
3. Describe the family's capacity to manage finances.

### **References**

Review of current job reference plus 3 personal references from persons unrelated to the applicants. At least one reference must have known the applicant(s) for five or more years, and at least one reference must be from a neighbor of the applicant(s).

If a current job reference will jeopardize the applicant's employment status, a reference may be obtained from a previous employer. If a previous employer is not available, a reference from an alternative such as a former teacher or supervisor of a volunteer activity would be acceptable.

### **Recommendation and Certification**

Recommendation and reasons for the proposed adoption including number of children and any specific restrictions such as race, age, gender and if approved for handicapped or special needs.

Statement certifying the worker's authorization to conduct home studies.

Signature of home study worker

Signature of home study worker's supervisor or agency director

**ADOPTIVE PARENT APPLICATION**  
**Adoption ARC, Inc**

Today's Date:

First Applicant Name:

Second Applicant Name:

Address:

E-mail Addresses

E-mail 1:

Email 2:

Telephone Numbers

Home:

Work 1:

Work 2:

Cell 1:

Cell 2:

Fax#:

Date & Place of Birth 1:

Date & Place of Birth 2:

Social Security Number 1:

Social Security Number 2:

If Married, Date & Place:

Type & Place of Employment 1:

Type & Place of Employment 2:

Race 1:

Race 2:

Type of Program Desired (please circle):

HI - Healthy Infant (Specify race and gender, if any)

SNI - Special Needs Infant

OC- Older child

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Name:  
Height:  
Weight:  
Hair:  
Eyes:  
Nationality:  
Religion:  
Highest Educational Degree:

Name:  
Height:  
Weight:  
Hair:  
Eyes:  
Nationality:  
Religion:  
Highest Educational Degree:

Primary Language:  
Other Languages:

Primary Language:  
Other Languages:

Marital Status:

Marital Status:

Previous Marriages:

Previous Marriages:

Children: (Please list ages and if biological, foster, adopted)

Who else lives in the home?

Describe the house or apartment briefly:

Pets? What type?

Hobbies:

Applicant 1: Ever Investigated for Child Abuse? (If Yes, please explain in detail and outcome)

Applicant 2: Ever investigated for Child Abuse? (if Yes, please explain in detail and outcome)

Applicant 1: Ever been convicted of child abuse or a felony? (If Yes, please explain in detail)

Applicant 2: Ever been convicted of child abuse or felony? (If Yes, please explain in detail)

Have you ever had a child placed with you for adoption, and not finalized? (If Yes, please give details including, Time, Date, Agency)

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

Applicant 1 Monthly Salary:

Applicant 2 Monthly Salary:

Other sources of income:

Monthly Expenses (including paying off debts):

Savings:

Investments:

Home - owned or rented?                      Value:

Life insurance:

Health insurance:

Will health insurance cover an adopted child from date of placement?

Is either applicant the primary support for any other person besides the applicants and child(ren) within the household? If yes please explain:

## **ADOPTION GOALS**

Age Range of Child Interested in Adopting? (We mostly place infants)

Race:

Open to siblings?

Are you open to special needs?

If you are open to special needs, what are you open to?  
(Physical, Handicap, or Mental Challenges. Drug Exposed, Alcohol Exposed, etc.)

Please write a sentence or two describing the child you hope to adopt:

When will you be ready to accept a child into your Home?

What Degree of Openness Would You Like With the Birth Parent?  
(Some General Information, Phone Call, Open Meeting at Time of Placement, Future contact  
Through agency, future visits, fully open)

Do you have a current Home Study (Within one year)?

What Agency performed the Home Study? (Please give Name, Address, Phone Number, and  
Social Worker)

Who Will Be Conducting Your Post-Placement Studies?  
(If it is an agency different from the Home study agency, Please give name, address, phone  
number and name of social worker)

\*\* Please give 2 Emergency Contact People Who Will Know Where You Are At All Times (This is important if we have to reach you with news of a child)

Name:

Name:

Address:

Address:

Phone Number(s):

Phone Number(s):

E-mail:

E-mail:

Relationship:

Relationship:

**I/We understand that the receipt of this application by Adoption ARC, Inc. does not constitute a contract of any type. It is merely an application. There is no guarantee that a child will be placed with us by Adoption ARC, Inc. at any time in the future. This fee will be active for one year from it's receipt in the office.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Applicant

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Applicant

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant Medical Report**  
**page 1**  
**(to be completed by physician)**

Name of Applicant:

Date of Exam:

How long have you known this patient:

Approximately how often have you seen this patient in that time?

Does this patient currently have any on-going or chronic medical conditions? If yes, please describe the nature of the condition and the prescribed course of treatment:

Is this patient currently on any medication? If yes, please describe what it is and the purpose it serves:

Does this patient have a history of any of the following:

\_\_\_\_\_ Psychological illnesses

\_\_\_\_\_ Alcohol abuse

\_\_\_\_\_ Drug/Substance abuse

If yes to any of the above, please describe your opinion as to how the patient is currently handling these issues:

Test results & dates:

TB/tine test:

Urinalysis:

Blood work-up:

**Applicant Medical Report  
page 2 (to be completed by the  
physician)**

Summary of Exam:

Height:

Weight:

Pulse:

Blood Pressure:

Vision:

Hearing:

Respiratory:

Heart:

Muscle Tone:

Spine/Back:

Extremities:

Any problems, illnesses or concerns:

Do you have any reasons you would not recommend this applicant to be  
an adoptive parent?                      If yes, please describe:

Physician's signature:

Printed name:

License #

**Applicant Medical Report**  
**Medical History page 3**  
**(to be completed by applicant)**

For each of the following illnesses or conditions, please answer yes or no to whether or not you have a history of this and make comments as to dates, course of treatment and/or current status:

AIDS/HIV positive:

Alcohol or substance abuse:

Anemia:

Asthma or other lung disease:

Blood disease:

Breast disease:

Cancer (specify type):

Diabetes:

Epilepsy:

Head injury:

Heart disease, surgery or irregularity:

High blood pressure:

Kidney, liver or bladder problems:

Mental or emotional illness:

Migraine or other severe headaches:

Orthopedic problems:

Stroke:

Thyroid or glandular problems:

Other: Please describe

## Reference Letter Format

(Acquaintance of 5 years or more)

Name of Reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear:

The above named applicant has applied to **Adoption ARC** for the purpose of becoming approved to provide foster care and/or adoptive parenting to a child in need of a home. The applicant has listed you as one of his/her references.

Please **write a letter** addressed to:

Adoption ARC  
4701 Pine Street, J-7  
Philadelphia, PA  
19143

In the letter please respond to the following questions and issues:

1. How long and in what capacity you have known the applicant. Also, mention whether or not you have seen the applicant with children and/or with his/her spouse/partner (if applicable).
2. Address the applicant's stability and appropriateness (in your opinion) in caring for/raising a child.
3. Describe the applicant's home/environment in terms of suitability and safety for a child.
4. If you had a child would you leave your child in this applicant's care for a day, a weekend or longer? Why or why not?
5. Please give your recommendation for or against this applicant's plans to parent via foster care or adoption and give your reasons.

Thank you for your cooperation. Please feel free to call the agency at 2.15-748-1441 if you have any questions.

## Reference Letter Format

(Neighbor)

Name of Reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear:

The above named applicant has applied to **Adoption ARC** for the purpose of becoming approved to provide foster care and/or adoptive parenting to a child in need of a home. The applicant has listed you as one of his/her references.

Please **write a letter** addressed to:

Adoption ARC  
4701 Pine Street, J-7  
Philadelphia, PA  
19143

In the letter please respond to the following questions and issues:

1. How long and in what capacity you have known the applicant. Also, mention whether or not you have seen the applicant with children and/or with his/her spouse/partner (if applicable).
2. Address the applicant's stability and appropriateness (in your opinion) in caring for/raising a child.
3. Describe the applicant's home/environment in terms of suitability and safety for a child.
4. If you had a child would you leave your child in this applicant's care for a day, a weekend or longer? Why or why not?
5. Please give your recommendation for or against this applicant's plans to parent via foster care or adoption and give your reasons.

Thank you for your cooperation. Please feel free to call the agency at 2.15-748-1441 if you have any questions.

## Reference Letter Format

(Non-Family Member)

Name of Reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear:

The above named applicant has applied to **Adoption ARC** for the purpose of becoming approved to provide foster care and/or adoptive parenting to a child in need of a home. The applicant has listed you as one of his/her references.

Please **write a letter** addressed to:

Adoption ARC  
4701 Pine Street, J-7  
Philadelphia, PA  
19143

In the letter please respond to the following questions and issues:

1. How long and in what capacity you have known the applicant. Also, mention whether or not you have seen the applicant with children and/or with his/her spouse/partner (if applicable).
2. Address the applicant's stability and appropriateness (in your opinion) in caring for/raising a child.
3. Describe the applicant's home/environment in terms of suitability and safety for a child.
4. If you had a child would you leave your child in this applicant's care for a day, a weekend or longer? Why or why not?
5. Please give your recommendation for or against this applicant's plans to parent via foster care or adoption and give your reasons.

Thank you for your cooperation. Please feel free to call the agency at 2.15-748-1441 if you have any questions.

## Employment Verification

Employee's name:

Employer's name:

Supervisor's name:

Name of Company:

Address of employer:

Employee's position:

Length of employment:

Salary: Benefits:

Do you anticipate that this employee will continue to be employed by this company in the foreseeable future? If not, why not?

Your name (printed):

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

Phone number:

## GOING HOME WITH YOUR BUNDLE OF JOY

1. Contact your home study/post placement social worker to inform him/her that you have a placement with Adoption ARC on placement date. Explain that you will be returning home after Interstate Compact Approval or Passport Hearing and will need your first post placement visit within 2 weeks( NJ) or within one month (PA).
  
2. ARC's office manager will send a letter to your post placement agency to send formats and timing of visits. Please ask your agency to respond by telephone to apprise us as to the understanding of the format and the timing of the visits.
  
3. Please ensure that you are attending and setting up all medical appointments with your child. Please apprise ARC of any medical problems immediately via telephone.
  
4. Check your documents for finalization
  - a. Do you have original or certified copy of marriage license/divorce decrees/death certificates.
  
  - b. Assume that finalization will occur between 8-12 months after placement. As such, will your child abuse and criminal clearances be over one year old? If so, they must be updated. Please give yourself enough time to update these clearances.
  
5. Send the required photos and letters to ARC on the contracted basis. Please remember that we will not call you when these are due or when they are received. However, if they are not received you will receive a telephone call from us.
  
6. ARC will call you to inform you when the parental rights are terminated (if appropriate).
  
7. Remember that you will be traveling back to Philadelphia to finalize the adoption (Unless otherwise stated). Here are the steps to get you back to Philadelphia:

a. Final Post Placement is submitted in appropriate format and sent to Adoption ARC

b. ARC supervisor approves the report and submits it to Tara Gutterman.Esq.

8. Tara Gutterman.Esq. produces the petitions and sends them to you for signature and approval.

9. You send petitions back to ARC, corrections are made (if necessary) and documents are filed with the Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County.

10. The Court will then send out a Court notice for hearing about 3-4 weeks after the submission and review of the legal filings.

11. The Court hearing should take place within 2 months after the filings, (typically)

12. After the hearing you will receive the official Adoption Decree (if all is in order).

13. The new birth certificates will come between 3-9 months after the hearing. (NJ birth certificates take 6-9 months for bureaucratic reasons)

14. You may get a social security card AFTER receiving the new birth certificate.

*Executive Director*  
Tara E. Gutterman, Esquire

## **Ongoing Birth Parent Letters and Photo Guidelines**

Birth parent letters and photos are very important in maintaining a positive relationship between the birthmother, child and adoptive family. The letters and photos provide reassurance for the birth mother that the child is healthy and thriving. They help promote a positive self image for the child and strengthen the bond between the birth mother, child and adoptive family.

### **When writing to the birth parent(s) include:**

- **Developmental milestones that the child has reached.**
- **Unique traits that the child has and/or special habits.**
- **Your thoughts and feelings about being an adoptive parent(s).**
- **Questions the child and/or you have about his/her birth parent(s).**
- **Traditions that you have started or will continue with the child.**
- **Interactions the child has with extended family members.**
- **The child's temperament and behaviors that are unique to the child.**
- **Recent vacations or places you have been to with the child i.e. parks, museums, movies, amusement parks, the beach etc.**
- **Some of the child's favorite things to do and what he/she likes.**

### **When sending photos to the birth parent(s) some suggestion are:**

**To send four to five photos.**

**That they are clear i.e. not blurry or too dark.**

**Include a photo of yourselves with the child.**

**Include a couple photos of the child only.**

**Include photos of the child with his/her favorite toy or engaging in a favorite activity.**

**Include photos of vacations and family get-togethers.**

**Include photos of the child's birthday parties.**

**Include photos that correspond with the birth parent letter.**

## **Dear Birthmother Letter and Photo Album Guidelines**

The "**Dear Birthmother Letter**" provides the prospective birthmother of your child an opportunity to get to know you before her child is born.

It is best if you keep the letter brief (1-2 pages) and chatty. Please talk about yourself, your family and your lifestyle. Favorite holiday celebrations or vacations sites are often appreciated.

The letter should also include at least one paragraph that describes your feelings about the birthmother herself — that you value her as a person and your level of comfort with meeting her and/or keeping in touch with her through letters and pictures in the future. The letter can be hand written or typed.

The **Photo Album** can be small or notebook size. Color photocopies are fine. There should be a minimum of 8-10 pictures. Please label the pictures by indicating who the people are and the event that is taking place. The labels are best if they are visible in the book and not on the backs of the photos. Some people like to include computer graphics (borders, baby clip art, etc.) in the presentation and that is fine.

### **Good people/sites to include:**

- All Immediate family members
- Extended family members
- Pets
- Your home
- The baby's room
- The neighborhood, school, church
- Friends (esp. friends of color if you are applying to adopt transracially)

### **Try to avoid:**

- Photos including anyone smoking
- Photos including beer cans, wine glasses
- Photos that are too intimate (i.e. nightgowns, bathtubs, etc.)
- Photos that are blurry or too distant

If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to call the office 215-748-1441.

## **The Benefits of Openness in Your Adoption**

### **What does openness in adoption mean to your child?**

Like all children, adoptees go through a stage when they are trying to form their identity, usually in their teens. This time is especially a sensitive time for adoptees. Openness in adoption allows the child to have information about their birth family. This knowledge often helps them come to terms with being adopted. When the child is of a different race than their adoptive parents, the openness provides a connection not only to their birth family, but also to their culture. Having openness in your adoption may decrease, it may not eliminate, the questions that an adoptee may have about their birth family. Imagine that today you were told that the parents you grew up with are not your biological parents. You would undoubtedly still love your parents, however you would most likely want to know who your birth parents are. Openness in adoption creates an environment where the child knows about the birth parents, and most importantly, why they were placed for adoption.

### **What does openness in adoption mean to you?**

What a great honor it is to know that your child's birth parents selected you to be their child's parents. Openness in adoption allows you to feel empowered that you were chosen in the sense to be parents to your child. As the child grows you can feel wonderfully about showing the birth parents the great life that you have created for the child. They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Well, when you're a birth parent and you receive a picture of the child you placed for adoption, it must be priceless. You allow the birth parents to feel that they have made the right decision for their child. You mean a lot to them and you give them strength to move forward with their life and come to peace with their decision.

### **What does openness in adoption mean to the birth parents?**

When a woman calls our agency to make an adoption plan, she is doing what may be the hardest thing she ever had to do. Some of them think they will never see their child again or know how the child is doing. When we tell them that they can have openness in their adoption, they are usually are elated. Imagine someone important in your life telling you they are moving to another country, and you will not see him or her for at least 18 years. Then imagine someone tells you that you can choose which country they go to, get pictures and letters, maybe even calls and visits. A little contact can change your view on the whole situation. Openness allows birth parents to be connected to someone they thought they would lose forever. The concept of openness in adoption empowers birth parents because they have control over what kind of adoption they have. It changes the situation and validates their role in the child's life, as the person who gave them life.

# Directions to Adoption ARC by Public Transportation

Phone 215-748-1441

1-800-884-4004

**Adoption ARC** is located at **4701 Pine Street** in West Philadelphia inside and apartment building known as Garden Court Plaza Apartments. We are on the 7th floor, at J-7 (make a right when you get off the elevator).

**FROM NORTH PHILADELPHIA BY SUBWAY:** Take the Broad Street Subway (Orange Line) South to City Hall. Go to Exit 4 for the Subway surface line (Green Line). Take the 34 via Baltimore Avenue. Get off at the corner of 47th and Baltimore. Make a right onto 47th Street and walk several blocks until you are at the corner of 47th and Pine. At the corner, make a left, and walk half-way down the block. You can't miss it.

**FROM NORTH PHILADELPHIA BY BUS:** Take the C Bus to City hall. Walk over to Walnut Street and get on the 21 Bus to 47th and Walnut and then get off and walk 3 blocks south to Pine Street. At the corner, make a right, and walk half-way down the block. You can't miss it.

- You may also pick up the 42 bus in Center City and take that up Spruce Street, getting off at the corner of 47th and Spruce and then walking 1 block south to Pine Street.

**FROM SOUTH PHILADELPHIA:** Take the Broad Street Subway (orange line) North and follow the steps under North Philadelphia from the exit at City Hall.

**FROM GERMANTOWN/MT. AIRY:** Take the 23 Bus downtown and get off in Center City as close to City Hall as possible. Then repeat the same steps as under the North Philadelphia directions.

**FROM WEST PHILADELPHIA:** We are near the corner of 47th and Pine. Pine Street is located 5 blocks south of Market Street.

Please call us, if you need help with these directions.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

**Homestudy-** A written report done by a licensed agency which gives a summary of your family life, values, histories, and desires to adopt. The report must be updated yearly.

**Criminal Clearances-** Within the State of Pennsylvania (and other States) the State police perform a computerized search of your name to determine that you do not have any criminal charges which would prevent you from adopting. These forms may be obtained at your Police Barracks and cost ten dollars for each person's search. All adults in the household must have this search. These also must be updated yearly.

**Child Abuse Clearances-** Within the State of Pennsylvania (and other states) there is a Central registry where the names of all indicated child abusers are kept on file. Pennsylvania requires a search of this registry before placement of a child. The Pennsylvania forms may be obtained through our agency. (In other states, they may be obtained through the State Department of Public Welfare). The cost of the search is ten dollars and must be updated yearly.

**Interstate-** The Interstate Compact is legal documentation which allows a baby to be placed from one state with adoptive parents in another state. The legal documentation must pass through and be approved by both State's Departments of Public Welfare.

**Consent to Adoption-** A legal document signed by birth parent(s) to give legal intent to his/her desire for the adoption of his/her child. It may be revoked until the Court enters a final termination decree.

**Birth Certificate-** A certified original from New Castle, Pa. indicating the birth mother's name, birth father's name and name, if any, that the birth parent had given the child in the hospital.

**No Claim to Paternity Document-** This document comes from the Child Support Enforcement Bureau in Harrisburg and will inform the agency if any man has filed a claim to be the father of the child.

**Intent to Adopt Petition-** A two page document which gives the name and address of the adoptive parents as well as the name, age and race of the baby. The adoptive family's homestudy must be filed with this Petition.

**Petition to Confirm Consent Petition-** This is a legal Petition consisting of about eight pages which asks specific questions about the birth family and circumstances surrounding the signing of the consents. The consents must be attached to this document. The filing of this document initiates the Termination of Parental Rights Hearing.

**Affidavit-** A legal document in which the party who makes it, swears that the information contained in the document is true and correct to the best of his/ her knowledge and belief.

**Termination of Parental Rights Hearing-** This is the hearing at which the Judge enters the decree ending the parental rights of the birth parent(s) forever. (There is a thirty day appeal period).