



## A Guardian Angel Adoptions Processes, Policies and Procedures Regarding Application, Match and Placement

### **Application:**

Congratulations!! You have already begun the application process by downloading your forms from our website. In order to become an approved adoptive family with *A Guardian Angel Adoptions, LLC*, you will need to complete all the paperwork and mail us the items on the Adoptive Family Checklist. Before applying with *A Guardian Angel Adoptions, LLC* please review the document from the State of Utah entitled "Adoption Orientation form for Adoptive Parents" on the forms section of our website before application. If you have any questions, please contact AGAA for clarification.

### **Education:**

Creating a family through adoption is beautiful and wonderful and also has its unique challenges. We want to give you tools to make your parenting journey as successful as possible. The more educated you become the more comfortable your child's adoption journey as well as your own will be. To help support you and your family we require some education to help you along the way. If you are adopting transracially, we require the course *Conspicuous Families* on the *Adoption Learning Partners* website. All adoptive families must complete the training *FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder)* and *Drug Exposure in Children*. These required trainings as well as other suggested trainings are listed on the *Pre-Placement Adoption Training* worksheet.

### **Review:**

Once we receive your completed packet our social work department will review your information. When review of your file and home study have been completed and you have been approved as an adoptive family you will receive an email informing you of your approval. If for any reason you are denied as an adoptive family, you will be given written notification within 10 business day and will also receive a copy of *A Guardian Angel Adoption's* appeal process and shall have the right to appeal the decision. This appeal will include the right to submit a written appeal and request reconsideration as well as meeting with AGAA Directors. *A Guardian Angel Adoptions, LLC* does not discriminate based on gender, race, religion or marital status. *A Guardian Angel Adoptions, LLC* seeks to find adoptive parents meeting our standards as well as the requirements of our licensing department and the requests of our expectant mothers.

### **Presentation:**

After you have become an approved adoptive family by our licensed social work department, you will receive an email wherein you will be given the username and password to our available situations page. Please check it often and let us know if you are interested in any of the posted situations. Please note that only minimal information is shared on the website to protect our expectant mothers' privacy and additional information is available on every situation. When you find a situation that you would like more information on please contact the number posted with the situations page and a member of the adoptive family department will contact you to share the non-identifying information about the case. You will receive an email with the information and the email will be followed up by a phone call wherein you may ask questions and receive clarification on any information shared. Included in the information you receive will be the legal risk involved, the medical and psychological background and family history, if possible, the race and gender of the child, any reported or verified history of drug and alcohol abuse, and the financial obligation associated with the case. Feel free to ask questions and please make sure you feel comfortable with the situation presented to you before being shown to the expectant mother. For families networking with other agencies, PLEASE DO NOT be shown on more than one situation at a time without talking to us first. Doing so without notifying AGAA could result in you being removed from our active adoptive family list. When all families have been notified and have made a decision the profiles for those families will be presented to the expectant mother. The choosing process can take anywhere from a couple of days to a couple of weeks. You will be notified as soon as we know anything at all.

### **Match:**

Once a selection is made a conference call will take place if both parties agree. A member of the adoptive family department will be on the line to guide you through this process. If all goes well on the call you will be considered matched. At this point you will be sent a matching email with your matched information and will also be contacted by the financial department as well as your case manager. The financial director will email you a financial contract to review and sign and you will then be required to wire transfer half of your adoption fees to AGAA. Once all these requirements are met you will begin to receive weekly updates. This is an exciting time as you begin to prepare for your baby and get to know your baby's expectant mother. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or concerns. We are here to walk this journey with you. You will never be alone during this process.

### **Delivery:**

When your expectant mother goes into labor (if you do not have a scheduled induction or cesarean section), she will contact her case manager. The case manager will then contact your case manager who will in turn contact you. At this point you should start considering

travel plans but should not purchase a ticket or leave. At the hospital the medical staff will monitor your expectant mother for about an hour and will make a decision as to whether she will be admitted to the hospital for delivery or will be sent home. You will then be notified of the outcome and assisted in making plans to arrive at the hospital if necessary. If you are flying to Utah and would like a representative from the adoptive family department to meet you at the airport, assist you in getting your rental car and take you to the hospital we are happy to do that. While the expectant mother is in the hospital you will be assisted in interacting with her, the medical staff and the baby. Please see the document on our forms page "Coming to Utah and Hospital Protocol" for further information.

#### **Placement:**

If your birth mother delivers in Utah, relinquishment and placement may occur 24 hours after delivery. The relinquishment your birth mother will sign in irrevocable. The social work staff will work closely with the nursing staff to insure the birth mother has been free of any narcotic for 4 hours prior and is ready to sign. Signing of the documents will take place separately. The adoptive family may sign the placement documents after the relinquishment documents are signed by the birth mother. Utah law requires that a notary be present at the signing. Copies of the documents will be given to the nursing staff to be included in the charts of both the baby and birth mother. When the pediatrician deems the baby ready to leave the hospital the baby will be released directly to the adoptive family. Please note that it is agency policy that the baby never leaves the hospital prior to the birth mother.

#### **Payment of AGAA Fees:**

A Guardian Angel Adoptions has a flat fee for all adoptions plus an application fee. Your application fee will be sent with your application. When you are matched with your birth mom you will be required to wire transfer half of your adoption fees and prior to traveling to Utah you will need to wire the remaining half of your adoption fees. **Note: These fees are non-negotiable. Please do not ask for a discount. Also, please remember that sometimes babies are born early, and, in this case, you will still need to have the funds available. Please prepare early!** If your adoption includes medical expenses, you will receive a list of the actual medical expenses as well as the contact information for each of the providers at signing. To receive our 50 percent discount all charges must be paid to the medical providers before your birth mother and baby discharge from the hospital. You may pay by, MasterCard, VISA, American Express, or personal check. If your birthmother qualifies for Medicaid, you must still pay for your baby's hospital stay as well as your baby's visits by the hospital pediatrician.

#### **Medical records:**

You will receive a copy of your baby's medical records in the mail after you return home.

#### **Interstate Compact (ICPC):**

If you are a family from outside of the state of Utah, it will be necessary for ICPC to be cleared by Utah as well as your home state before you will be permitted to leave the state with your baby. ICPC will be started as soon as the medical records are received from the hospital. This usually takes 24-48 hours after discharge. The medical records will complete the ICPC package and it will be emailed to the ICPC office in Salt Lake City. You will be notified when this is done. If upon receiving your packet your home state office or the Utah office requests any additional documents, they will be sent to them as soon as possible. You will then be notified when your ICPC clearance is emailed to our office and will be allowed to return home. Please note that ICPC is a government agency which we have no control over however, we will do our part to process your request in a timely manner. **Please do not contact any of the ICPC offices as this causes confusion and frustration which can delay the process.**

#### **Going Home:**

Supervisory Visits: There is a supervisory period of generally six months before finalization is allowed. You will visit with a Social Worker on two or three occasions to help ensure that you and your child are adjusting to each other and to confirm the success of the placement. Generally, this is done by the social worker that completed your home study. Additional visits may be scheduled as needed. Note: If you are a Utah family post placement visits must be done by AGAA.

#### **Insurance:**

Please notify your health insurance company of your new addition and send over the "Adoption Placement Agreement" to them. This document will act as your birth certificate until you receive your amended certificate. Many insurance companies will reimburse some adoption expenses. Also check with your employer regarding additional adoption benefits and be sure to take advantage of all tax breaks.

#### **Finalization of the Adoption:**

This is an exciting time and can take place after a successful supervisory period generally of 6 months. AGAA will be in contact with your attorney and will grant permission for the finalization of your adoption after all requirements are met. You are responsible for any legal fees associated with finalization. Talk to your social worker or our office staff about getting an amended birth certificate. The new birth certificate will list you as parents and include your child's name as shown on the adoption decree.

So long as the statutory requirements are met, you are eligible to finalize the adoption in Utah under Utah law if you are a resident of Utah, the child was born in Utah, or one of the birth parents resides in Utah when the adoption petition is filed. Finalizing the adoption in Utah typically saves adoptive families in legal expenses and provides for a more secure adoption. It also enables a representative from AGAA to more easily attend the finalization hearing to consent to the adoption and to address any issues that the court may have. For these reasons, you are required to finalize the adoption in Utah. In rare cases, where finalizing the adoption is not legally possible, you will need to obtain express written permission from AGAA before commencing proceedings to adopt the child in another state. Note: In most cases you will not need to return to Utah but can appear before the Judge before leaving to go home.

**Benefits:**

Please be aware that if your child has a disability, the child may be eligible for SSI benefits and/or federal adoption assistance. If you think your child may qualify please contact the Division of People with Disabilities for further resources.

**A Word About Legal Risk:**

Every adoption has legal risks! They are unavoidable. Some of these risks are obvious while others are hidden. It is the responsibility of *A Guardian Angel Adoptions, LLC* to evaluate these risks and share them with the adoptive family. Although we are experienced at adoption and work with our attorneys on each case, we can never guarantee the outcome of an adoption. We will share the risks we may see with you so that you can be informed and proactive on your case. Following are general descriptions of situations that have varying degrees of risk. These are guidelines only; a situation with minimal risk could result in losing a child, on the other hand a high-risk situation may finalize without a problem.

**Minimal Risk:** There are very minimal risks when;

- The expectant mother and father sign in a state where relinquishment is irrevocable. or
- The expectant mother is not married, or she is married to the father and he is willing to relinquish his rights as well.

**Mild Risk:** There is a mild risk in the following situations.

An unmarried expectant mother signs in a state where the relinquishment is irrevocable and though the father doesn't relinquish at the time the birth mother does, either

- The conception was in a state with a Putative Birth Father Registry, or
- The father is not named, or
- The father is fully aware and supportive of the adoption plan.

**Mod Risk:** There is a moderate risk if an unmarried expectant mother

- Signs in a state where relinquishment is revocable for a short period of time or
- The father is known and cannot be contacted, or
- The father is aware of the pregnancy and is not supportive, or
- The expectant mother is married to someone other than the father. Any time the expectant mother is married it is important to determine if the expectant mother's husband would like to parent the child.

**High Risk:** There is a high risk if the expectant mother

- Signs in a state where relinquishment is revocable for an extended period of time, or
- The expectant mother is married and the husband wants the child whether he is the legal father or father and has been financially and emotionally supportive of the pregnancy and does not want the child placed for adoption.

Note: Unless the birth father gives consent for the adoption at the same time the birth mother does, the adoption is considered a "Legal Risk Adoption." Consequently, it will become necessary to determine and then terminate his rights in accordance with the laws of any states involved with the adoption.

It is ultimately the responsibility of adoptive family to consult with an attorney of their choice about the laws of their state and the risks associated with their adoption.

Please be aware that there are children in custody with the State of Utah that are available for adoption. Information on these children can be obtained by contacting the Division of Child and Family Services. When adopting these children, the following assistance may be available: Medicaid, tax benefits and adoption subsidies.

**Disputes:**

Although the adoption process often results in a successful outcome that enables adoptive parents to fulfill their dream of parenting a child, adoptive parents should understand that no outcome is guaranteed, the adoption process can be emotionally complex, and that disagreements can occasionally arise between adoptive parents and the agency. Should the adoptive parents have a disagreement or difference of opinion with AGAA regarding the services provided by AGAA or any other matter related to the adoptive placement or any agreement signed by the parties, they should first communicate those to AGAA staff. If verbal conversations or email contact do not resolve the issue, the adoptive parents must lodge a formal written complaint to AGAA and allow AGAA ten business days to respond to the complaint. If the parties are unable to resolve the dispute by this internal complaint process, then the parties shall mediate the dispute before a mediator in Utah, mutually agreed to by the parties. The parties shall share equally the costs of the mediation. By signing this document, the adoptive parents agree that they will not seek legal recourse in a court of law or equity without first following these policies and procedures regarding any dispute. If the parties are unable to resolve the dispute by mediation, any subsequent litigation regarding the dispute shall occur in the Utah state court, and not in the court of any other state or jurisdiction.

**Children in State Custody**

Please be aware that there are children in custody with the State of Utah that are available for adoption. Information on these children can be obtained by contacting the Division of Child and Family Services. When adopting these children, the following assistance may be available: Medicaid, tax benefits and adoption subsidies.

**Definition of Adoption Plans:**

- Open Adoption: Family and expectant mother share identifying and non-identifying information. Phone calls and visits are common.
- Semi-open: Non-identifying information is shared. Pictures and letters are exchanged through the agency. The parties meet prior to placement but not after.
- Closed: No information is given to either party. The parties mostly likely won't meet. Very seldom will a birth mother request a closed adoption.

Although openness agreements are not enforceable under Utah law. AGAA strongly recommends that you keep your promises to your birth mother. Doing so is not only comforting to your birth mother as she grieves the loss of her child but also emotionally healthy for your family as your child and birth mother may meet someday and you will want to be known as someone who was ethical in the relationship because of your love for your child and birth mother.

I have read and understand this document.

---

Adoptive Parent #1 Signature

---

Date

---

Adoptive Parent #2 Signature

---

Date