

12/27/08 - The Adoption Bracket



When people come to one of the Adoption Support Groups they usually want to know how to quickly adopt a child. However I recommend that they take a few steps back in order to figure out what type of adoption is best for them. Just because one method of adoption may be quicker doesn't mean that it's the best fit for their family.

I think of the route to choosing the best adoption for someone is similar to the basketball bracket used during March Madness. But you must think of it in reverse. The two teams in the championship game are the two basic kinds of adoption - Domestic and International. Once you select one then you go off onto the bracket on their side of the chart.

If you choose Domestic adoption, then you decide what age child you are interested in. It would be either an older child (over age one year of age) or a newborn.

If you want an older child, then your main option to adopt is to go through your state's foster-to-adopt system. Some adoption agencies also may help older children to be adopted but they seem to be harder to find. If you decide this route, you'll have many other questions to answer for yourself, such as "Would I want a sibling group?", "Would I want to foster before adopting?", and "What emotional and physical issues in a child am I comfortable with?"

If you want a newborn to need to choose adoption through a private entity (like a lawyer), or an agency, or a facilitator, or adopt through your state system. One way to help determine which a best fit is for you is to look at your finances. A lawyer would be inexpensive (around \$10K) but odds are you may have to do a lot of legwork locating potential birthmothers. An agency or facilitator can range in fees from \$15K up to \$45K. The state system will be free.

Next you need to know what state you want to adopt through. One thing that makes adoption even more confusing is that every state has their own adoption laws.

Luckily though you can adopt from any state no matter where you live. The main difference between the laws is how much time there is between when the birthparents sign their relinquishment papers and when those papers are recognized by the Court of Law. It could be a few hours, days or weeks before the Court recognizes the relinquishment. It is dependent on the state laws, the county where the relinquishment takes place or the policies of that county's Judges. Currently only three states, Florida, Texas and Kansas, have set laws which say that the moment the relinquishment papers are signed, they are immediately recognized by the Court.

Once you choose the state, next is the question of the type of newborn you are willing to accept. You will have to consider race, prenatal care, Birthparent health history, and other issues that your agency, lawyer or facilitator will discuss with you.

If you are interested in International adoption, you should first check and see what countries are open to adoptions. Recently, there have been many changes in the International adoption world due to the Hauge Treaty. Don't assume a country is open just because it was a year ago. You then need to research the criteria of the countries you are interested in. Some of the countries have specific things that can disqualify you as an adoptive parent. An example of this is that China will not accept potential adoptive parents if they have a history of ever taking an antidepressant.

Another consideration with picking a country is the age and sex of the child you want. Currently, the youngest child you will be able to adopt internationally is around 9 months. From the people I know in the international adoption community, it seems like most of the children arrive home at 15 months of age on average. As for the child's sex, requesting a girl usually will lengthen your wait. But some countries, such as Kazakhstan, will not allow you to select your child's sex until you are in the country.

Once you pick a country you are interested in, you should find a qualified agency who adopts through them. No matter where you live, you can use an agency located anywhere in the United States. The advantage of a local agency is that they may have free seminars where you can go in to learn more about the countries or they may have local support groups for adoptive families.

The path to adopt is full of questions you need to answer - and this is just to figure out where and how you are going to adopt. Some of the answers will come

naturally while others you may need to reflect upon for awhile. No one can answer these questions for you but you.

The Adoption Bracket is not an easy one for anyone to maneuver. For myself, we chose Domestic - Newborn - Private Agency - Texas. It seems simple to put it in those terms but there was a lot of soul searching and researching by P and I to get to that point.

By the time you reach the end of your bracket and decide on your route to adopt it will all become clear that it was the route you were always meant to take. This bracket truly is one of the most daunting and difficult stages in the adoption process.

So once you master it, pat yourself on the back and get to filling out your adoption papers!

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Three Yellow Roses