

REFORM Talk Ethics Package

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[Ethical Adoption and Prospective Parent Motivation](#) (Pages 2-3)

Please take the necessary time to research the following information from government sites, media, chat lists, face-to-face support groups, and the links on our blog:

1. Neither coercion nor inducements of first families occurred. Children were not recruited from their biological families for the purpose of adoption.
2. Attempts where possible have been made to keep the child within his/her family of origin.
3. If old enough to fully understand what adoption truly means, potential adoptees have been given complete information about being placed with you with respect to culture, religion, language, and anything else important to the potential adoptee.
4. No trafficking, falsification of paperwork, or falsification of information contained in the children's paperwork occurred. Movements of a child to different locations should have reasonable, credible explanations.
5. Complete social and medical history is available for the child.
6. Any fees involved in the process can be accounted for, dollar by dollar, and appear to follow the legal process in the area you are adopting from.
7. Placement considers child's background, any medical conditions or special needs, religious background where appropriate, and culture when choosing the best adoptive home for child.
8. You have been through a thorough screening of your full abilities to parent (not a rubber-stamped home study).
9. The adoptee, original families, and prospective parents are treated with respect and professionalism.
10. You have been properly and adequately educated about adoptive parenting and both the known and possible needs of the child.
11. You are determined to meet those needs to the best of your abilities.
12. You demonstrate a commitment to validating the child's original culture and/or family.

13. You recognize the importance of the original family and previous caregivers to your child. You agree to maintain ties with family of origin, foster parents, or other caregivers where those individuals are known and want continued contact either directly or under the supervision of a knowledgeable counselor or other intermediary with safeguards in place. Adopted children should not be forced against their will to maintain contact; if, however, children do want contact, you have the responsibility to ensure this happens in a manner best for the child

14. Post-placement support is **accessible**, **appropriate**, and **indefinite** following a placement. Prospective parents need to recognize the importance of this support while they are still in the pre-adoption phase and start to demand that health and educational resources are being given by both homestudy and placing agencies.

What Adoption Should Be

The following holds true for domestic, foster care or international adoption.

Adoption should be

1. the **truthful** placement of a child **truthfully** in need
2. keeping his/her **long-term best interest** in mind
3. with someone that is **properly prepared**.

When **truth** is not part of it or **only short-term needs** are in mind or if a child is placed with **unprepared** people, then we have a problem. The sad fact is that all three of these are problems with the current, modern adoption system. Money slithers into and corrupts at all three points. Reform is needed at each point.

Truth

Marketing

Adoption occurs after the severance of parental rights. Adoption should not influence the severing OF the rights. The terms “loving act”, “courageous” and other fluff in domestic adoption marketing was developed by US tax dollars. What am I talking about? The focus groups and studies that are used by the major adoption agencies were funded by Federal Grant \$\$! Yep, we all paid for it. Read this 3-part series on how the lobbying organization of two of the biggest agencies in the country Bethany and Gladney came to this type of advertising [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#) and [Part 3](#) by Claudia Corrigan D’Arcy first published in November 2007. This “goodmother” domestic idea has been copied into the international adoption marketing as well. The loving abandonment fairy tale is often told about many placing countries.

Scheming

Scheming to get a child, whether it is a special needs child or healthy one can alter placing the child with the best fit **for that child**.

The prospective adoptive parent lying in their homestudy or to get waivers are two of the schemes. Shopping for social workers and agencies willing to take their family even though they are not equipped to take on a particular child is another example. Improper or lack of financial planning, especially by child collectors, can also take on a scheming angle when prospective parents really have no way of paying for the adoption unless they beg for money from others. The lack of a safety net post-adoption can put the child at risk for disruption or abuse. See our How Could You? posts for more.

Adoption agencies who harvest children, falsify paperwork or look the other way when kidnapping or murder or paper falsification is involved in procuring a child falls into the category of not having the child **truthfully** need another family.

Money corrupts here by high international fees being used in bribes or worse to increase the supply of kids in the category of the adoptive parent's desire (this is not just for healthy as young as possible girls, but for boys, special needs and older children.)

Long Term Best Interest

Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian aid is one solution for SHORT-TERM needs. But humanitarian aid has gotten twisted into adoption AND adoption agencies have become the big humanitarian aid givers which FURTHERS the corruption in foreign countries. They should have NO PART in humanitarian aid as it is a MAJOR CONFLICT OF INTEREST and lies near the heart of ALL country shutdowns. When placing agencies throw money around destitute villages, it influences people to “abandon” children and to coerce, kidnap or kill for the child that will bring them money.

Adoption Not an Emergency

Adoption should never be seen as an emergency. Adoption is a legal process following the terminating of parental rights. There should never be a rush to terminate parental rights or whisk children quickly away. The child and the adoptive parent must be prepared. This takes time. Ensuring that the child is taken care of is the SEPARATE, SHORT-TERM need.

WHO SHOULD PARENT THE CHILD MUST BE SEPARATED FROM FEEDING, CLOTHING, MEDICALLY-ATTENDING TO OR EDUCATING A CHILD!!!

Keep adoption and humanitarian aid separate and corruption will disappear because the money incentives will go with it. Taking out the international fees will remove MUCH of the corruption.

Prepared Parents

Finding Families for Children

“Finding families for children” is the marketing mantra but shifting the living arrangement of the children is not good enough. **Implied** in that is that the new family is properly checked and prepared; that the child needs a new family; and that the child wants to be with the adoptive family. This is **just not a guarantee** and preparedness is becoming increasingly less plausible as special needs adoptions rise yet preparation is not. This phrase also implies that children don't already have an original/biological family. The original family will **not** be scrubbed from the child even

if their paperwork has been scrubbed. Those last points about bond to the original family can affect the child's bonding and attitude to the new family and even make the children appear disordered if not understood. See our How Could You? posts for more.

Balance

In today's modern adoption process, there is no balance of the number and type of children in need (supply) and the number of prepared families wanting to adopt (demand). **Supply and demand will never meet.** There will only ever be a small segment of people willing to take on international adoption or special needs kids. **Don't even try** to equate it with birthing a child with special needs. No matter how many people say they are blessed by their child's special need, no one in their right mind prays for or wishes for their child to have a special need. Even fewer will want to take on a child unrelated to them into their family. So the adoption industry will try to coax and guilt as many people as possible into taking on more than they can handle. Doing things faster like well-heeled campaigns are promoting only causes corruption to **worsen**.

Desperation

"Finding" stresses the desperation part of the equation. We see a lot of desperation of prospective adoptive parents. The DESPERATION of those that advocate for the special needs children that are very hard to place (both agencies and adoptive parents) is causing havoc because ALL checks and balances are being **thrown out the window** in the name of "saving the child". It is both a RUSH and ADRENALINE RUSH for these people to place the kids.

The focus should be on matching as many children in need with as many qualified parents as possible.

If you prepare, you scare; the quicker the process, the better; or preparation and its twin postadoption support are not our problem is the approach of the adoption agency. The adoption industry will not be putting money into preparing/supporting you unless regulations require them to. It isn't going to happen on its own. Improving quality is not on their agenda.

Separating Fantasy and Reality--Our Favorite Accusations About "Criticizing" aka Speaking Honestly about Adoption and Reform

How can you NOT like (fill in the blank charity, facilitator agency, advocate)? Because they will NOT be there if/when you have a POST-ADOPTION issue. Success = placement of the child. End of story. They don't think beyond that. All activities are geared towards future placements. (See Truth section)

But International adoptions are DECREASING! Shouldn't you try to INCREASE them? Statistics are meaningless if the children's needs are not paramount. INDIVIDUALLY

matching kids WITHOUT MONETARY INCENTIVES should drive the decisions in adoption, not trying to meet some statistic. This takes a lot of effort, a lot of time and a lot of money but it is what is RIGHT and what kids deserve (see Truth section).

But there are sick, lonely, dying, uneducated, undernourished kids and adoption

solves that. 🙄 (see Long-Term Best Interest section)

But, if you say **that** (explain real needs of the kids, explain adoption agency ethical issues) people will be scared to adopt! GOOD. You should be SCARED to adopt a child with a special need that doesn't speak your language, that your local school system will not help very much, that you will have to strongly advocate daily for possibly forever and who may bankrupt you, cause havoc with other family member, your house, your neighborhood and community and possibly cause a divorce or disruption. **Yep, if that doesn't scare you, your head is still in the sand.** (See Prepared Parents section.)

What can be done to Reform Adoption?

Here is a starting point (and please share your ideas in our comments):

Truth

- Lobby to remove international fees and adoption credits
- Lobby to remove monetary incentives that states receive for placing foster children with adoptive families, as this leads to wrongful removals.
- Shut down bad agencies by reporting wrongdoing to authorities
- Prosecute perpetrators of crimes associated with adoption
- Lobby to ban bad adoption personnel for life
- Support justice and redress for wronged adoptees and read PoundPup Legacy
- Sue players involved in wrongful processes
- Join PEAR
- Read REFORM Talk blog
- Support Unrestricted Access to birth certificates for adoptees and follow adoptee issues on Bastard Nation.
- Discuss issues with any person that will listen. The general public needs to understand these challenges.

Long-Term Best Interest

- Support Family Preservation first
- Lobby for adoption agency separation from humanitarian aid and country development.
- Lobby to stop US elected officials from lobbying for adoption agencies in other countries. Child welfare should not be a business. US government should not be involved in procuring foreign children for US citizens.
- Lobby for rights of biological parents need to be recognized by all states. Quick, coercive, deceptive placements need to stop (hint: that means you, Utah.)

Prepared Parents

- Support and demand initiatives for comprehensive and therapeutic parent training
- Assist in and demand awareness and access to health and education needs
- Assist in and demand development education system and testing to assess and address needs
- Assist in and demand development in health care and mental health care sector to address needs
- Give ongoing peer-to-peer support for parenting issues and any adoptee need.

A final word about adoption advocacy: Keeping hush about bad things that agencies or PAPs/APs do is NOT advocating for adoption. Keeping your head in the sand is NOT advocating for adoption. It is important to understand the background of how your child came to be with you. **Keeping things hush allows corruption to continue, proliferate and shift to new places.** Pretending to be an amateur social worker/adoption placement warrior may be breaking laws and is a form of child exploitation. The child does not have say in his or her photo and private information being splashed across the internet. Dignity of the child MUST be maintained.

Understand the issues that cause kids to be available for adoption and the billion dollar industry that is trying to get into your wallet. Don't be led off the cliff by the slick adoption industry.

Red Flags in International Adoption (Pages 9-10)

- ❑ Adoption finalized before you meet child.
- ❑ Age of child clearly different from paperwork.
- ❑ Agency asks for psych assessment of you if you question procedure.
- ❑ Agency claims that all older children want to be internationally adopted.
- ❑ Agency claims that there are plenty of available post-adoption care and resources available.
- ❑ Agency claims the orphanage/foster home that is paid for /run by them is much better than locally-run homes.
- ❑ Agency communication drops precipitously after initial payment.
- ❑ Agency downplays complaint against agency or COA action – complaint due to disgruntled PAP or bureaucracy.
- ❑ Agency downplays media articles on trafficking in the country.
- ❑ Agency downplays special need.
- ❑ Agency gives no receipt for cash payments.
- ❑ Agency has threatened, harassed, or sued PAPs or APs who speak out.
- ❑ Agency has trolls on agency-assessment websites or Yahoo groups.
- ❑ Agency hiding behind religious beliefs/dogma to excuse unethical behavior.
- ❑ Agency hiring facilitators known to have a checkered past.
- ❑ Agency insists that their pilot program country is most/more ethical than country in same region.
- ❑ Agency kicks you out of their internal message board for asking question.
- ❑ Agency lying that child “really wants to be adopted.”
- ❑ Agency previously Hague-denied.
- ❑ Agency refusing to accept/acknowledge responsibility for unethical behavior.
- ❑ Agency set up program very fast/no history in the country.
- ❑ Agency stating that all children who grow up in orphanages are doomed to a terrible future.
- ❑ Agency tries to convince you to change parameters of child after you have contracted with them (this may indicate that a bait and switch on type of child is occurring.)
- ❑ Alternate process than what you contracted for when you get to the country.
- ❑ Cash payments are handed off to facilitators/middlemen.
- ❑ Country prefers PAP to be a certain religion or ethnicity but your agency says they can get you a referral anyway/downplays conversion to another religion (examples: Morocco, Pakistan, Armenia.)
- ❑ Directly paying judge or other official when that is not part of stated country process (Judges never should be paid.) Other government entities may receive payments legitimately in the process but it should be stated in the laws and DOS www.adoption.state.gov
- ❑ Discounting Hague regulations by your agency (Agency assuring you that even though the Hague regulations say one thing, it is ok to proceed another way.)

- ❑ Disruptions from certain agency programs or country are being published in increasing quantity.
- ❑ DOS gives a warning on proceeding to adopt from country.
- ❑ Gag clause in contract.
- ❑ Get Referral before you sign on to agency.
- ❑ Get Referral before your homestudy.
- ❑ Gushing praise of child to mask serious special needs.
- ❑ Media articles of issues in country (current articles and check Schuster Institute, PEAR, PoundPupLegacy and REFORM Talk.)
- ❑ Media stories about trafficking from orphanages still placing kids internationally.
- ❑ Other PAPs being issued NOIDS in your country. (This will be very hard information to find. Support groups and sometimes the media discuss them. Lobbying efforts to publicize NOIDS need to be made.)
- ❑ Pay fee, then learn country not really open and agency sways you to another country (bait and switch on country program. Recent Example: many Haiti programs post-earthquake.)
- ❑ Pressure from referral agency or organization to adopt multiples, multiple unrelated or multiple SN children simultaneously (Example: Reece's Rainbow.)
- ❑ Process that agency tells you does not match DOS website.
- ❑ Referral information same as every other family that is with the agency or coming from the same orphanage.
- ❑ Referral photo of child different from actual child.
- ❑ Region(s) start to shut down in the country.
- ❑ Size of fee high for age of child.
- ❑ Size of fee high for child with disability.
- ❑ Size of fee high for race of child.
- ❑ Umbrella-ing agency. If an agency cannot become licensed in the placing country, you should ask why.
- ❑ You are one of a long list of waiting PAPs and have already had to pay many fees. If an agency can only place x number of kids per year but you are multiple times x on the waiting list, then there is a problem. Either the placement won't occur or there are not enough kids that need placement or will be able to be placed. Agency and program longevity need questioning

The nine points are as follows:

1. Keep social workers with an agenda away from expectant mothers.
2. Mandate counseling for all potential birthmothers.
3. Train all hospital workers in sensitive adoption practices.
4. Keep hopeful adoptive parents out of the delivery room and away from the hospital.
5. Abolish irrevocable consent.
6. End adoption advertising.
7. Let closed adoptions dwindle like the Dark Age remnant they are.
8. Open records for adult adoptees.
9. Make open adoption agreements legally enforceable.

Some of our favorite quotes:

"Birthmothers do not give their children as gifts to needy parents; if anything they give the parents as gifts to their children"

"Yes, the prospective parents will face real pain if the birthmother decides to keep her baby. But the cold truth is that no one is going to leave that hospital without pain. The potential birthmother is expected to bear the pain, and to bear it FOREVER."

"Adoptive families like to say their families were formed by God. If so, then why do they need marketing to get the job done? If God wants to form a family by adoption, then prospective adoptive parents need to sit back, shut up and let Him do it. "

" Babyselling is rightfully despised in our culture, yet somehow baby soliciting is not. "

" Adoptive parents function as the gods in the adoption triad, and like the gods of mythology they can be either benevolent or terrible. I urge both present and prospective adoptive parents to try to truly feel the enormity of birthmother and adoptee loss. Then, if you still feel the adoption is necessary and good, go ahead with it...but do it in a dignified way that honors your child-to-be and the family from which he comes. Then adoption is allowed to be a blessed event, not a disgraceful one."

[Tuesday Terms Disruption and Dissolution](#) (Pages 12-14)

Disruption is an adoption that does not become final even though the adoptive parents have been identified. This may also be known as a failed adoption attempt.

Dissolution is the voiding of a legal adoption after there has been a final decree.

Though these terms carry distinct legal differences, the most-often-used term in the adoption world for legal dissolutions is "disruption", so we will use the more common term here.

There are some helpful articles for preparing prospective adoptive parents and for adoptive parents considering dissolution. Though these following two articles are geared towards foster care, many aspects can apply to international adoption disruptions as well: [Planning](#) and [Support](#).

Truth About Training and Services

The truth is pre-adoption training is **minimal**, topics are often **self-chosen** by prospective adoptive parents in many cases, there are no federal requirements, nonHague adoptions do not require it and many states require **zero** international adoptive parent training. Furthermore, no adoption agency provides adequate resources. There is no coordination of research across health disciplines and no coordination of post-adoption services. Many parents use placing agencies outside their state, so the local homestudy provider may not understand the country issues and the out of state agency does not know the resources local to the parent.

When this topic hits news articles, common responses from the general public have included "just get mental health help", "insurance covers treatments" or "get state foster care involved." These are **dangerously** uninformed. This **wrongly** assumes that:

- adoptive families have geographic availability, job security, insurance coverage and knowledge of how to access these specialized services.
- insurance pays for the extensive mental health therapies that are needed.
- health professionals with extended knowledge on the treatment of trauma-based backgrounds are numerous, easy to find, willing to take their child as a patient, or don't require multiple references from other professionals before they treat your child.
- waitlists for experienced health professional that last many months don't exist.
- diagnosing mental health issues is quick, easy or involves only seeing one health professional.
- some kind of amorphous "training" has prepared the parents to deal with behaviors associated with trauma and abuse backgrounds such as violence, fire-setting, sexual

abuse and intimidation of family members, rage, running away, stealing, vandalism, and pitting family members against each other in the home.

- finding respite care for a child with extreme behavior problems is as easy as looking in the Yellow Pages.
- the child can will have relate-ability with parents, siblings, friends, and new community. A finite number of people have been raised in an orphanage and flown to a country with a different language and culture to be raised permanently there.

No book that anyone reads, no seminar that anyone attends prepares an adoptive parent for unexpected, painful parenting challenges. It is a **complex, long-term puzzle** to find the right order and type of help, medications, psychiatrists, psychologists, therapies, diagnoses that can fit into one's budget, schedule and insurance...while staying sane and strong for your family. Sometimes, even years of exhaustive therapy and "help" by medical professionals cannot heal a hurt and traumatized child. What, then are parents expected to do?

Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs)

Others have suggested that children be taken to a residential treatment center. Well, in some states, you as a parent can call after your child has been diagnosed with a serious psychiatric disorder and enroll your child, but in other states your child has to have spent a certain number of days in an acute facility followed by a decision-making panel before entry. Other barriers include cost, lack of availability in the vicinity, long waitlists or specific hurdles like already sexually abused another person (vs. attempted to sexually abuse another person.)

Two ways that costs can be covered for a residential treatment center: If your child is on Medicaid or if you can get an IEP (individualized Education plan) from the public school district. Neither of these options come quick or easy and getting on Medicaid for some will not be an option. The out-of-pocket cost if you can't obtain either of those options can be **up to \$125,000 per year**. Stepdown care from a residential treatment center often is in a group home -- out-of-pocket costs can be **\$75,000 per year**. There are a limited number of specialty centers mostly in the Western US that run a cost of about **\$3,500/month**.

Results vary in RTCs. Sometimes they are only a temporary reprieve on a long, painful, lonely road to disruption.

The Disruption Decision

Ability and consequences to terminate parental rights differs by state. Ramifications on other children in the household NEED to be considered before a decision is made. There is NOT a simple answer. Agencies sometimes help. Sometimes parents are left to advertise their children on websites, forums and **unlicensed** help groups.

In some states, terminating parental rights means declaring child abandonment. See [here](#) for more information on this topic.

The 2007 summary of Child Neglect & Abandonment State Statutes from the National District Attorneys Association can be found [here](#).

A [conviction of child abandonment](#) may prevent an adoptive parent from working with kids (which in turn can limit employment opportunities), may endanger custody of the other kids in the home or may curb or take away some rights, such as serving on juries, voting and owning firearms.

In the case of termination of parental rights to the state, the adoptive parent still may have to pay support until the child turns 18. State and adoption subsidies may assist in the cost. It is a myth that health insurance pays for this treatment or that if placed in foster care that the total expense would be covered by the state. The cost of support until age 18 even when the original adoptive parent is no longer parenting can cause bankruptcy and loss of your home. The combination of the factors of costs and legal consequences may cause an adoptive parent to choose to keep a violent child in their home. Divorce and adoptive parent emotional and psychological problems occur frequently. In tragic, high-profile cases, **this has led to placing the adopted child in danger from the adoptive parent leading to abuse or death.** This is what spawned our idea of tracking abuse in our How Could You? Hall of Shame files.

If a parent chooses to keep a child that exhibits violence and the child harms another child in their home, the adoptive parents can and have been charged with child endangerment. This is a lose/lose situation for the entire family. ***So sometimes, the decision between keeping the child or terminating parental rights is a catch 22.***

Ethical Considerations After Trafficking Discovered or Suspected

