

**Fact Sheet
N° 21**

Adoption

THE ADOPTABILITY OF THE CHILD: THE REPORT ON THE CHILD FOR PROCEEDING WITH ADOPTION

A report on the child must be drafted on the basis of the previous studies. It is an essential document for processing adoption in the best interests of this particular child. This report should be the fullest portrait possible of the child and his family of origin. The need for it and its content are stipulated in article 16 of The Hague Convention of 1993, which requires: The child's identity, Adoptability, Social environment, Personal and family evolution, Medical history of the child and family, Special needs, Proof of the required consents

The report will contain, to the extent possible:

1. The motives for which adoption is the measure proposed. It is important that information about the efforts made to avoid abandonment or to reinstate the child in his family of origin should be displayed. When inter-country adoption is involved, the specific reasons that justify it should also be set out.
2. A synthesis of the psychosocial information collected during the study of the child and the biological family. The information should be sufficiently detailed to facilitate the matching of a family likely to respond to the needs of the child.
3. The medical file on the history and the child's state of health, as well as his family background. Upon reception, the case will include a prognosis of the possibilities and conditions for a positive evolution of the child's state of health.
4. The legal file on the child's adoptability, including proof that the required consents have been received (of the parents or guardians, etc.).
5. A description of the child's current living conditions, his habits, relationships, behaviour.
6. An assessment of the positive elements/strengths as well as the risks present in his personality, past experiences and characteristics of the child for forging a satisfactory adoptive relationship, that is to say, above all, his capacity to give up his past way of life, including a return to the family of origin, and to bond with a new family.
7. An indication of the type of family likely to respond to the needs of the child and help his integration into the new family and into the society around him: the composition of the family, its character, age, etc.
8. Whatever other information that might help to determine the matching in the interests of the child and the adoptive family.
9. Photographs of the child or possibly a video.

Importance of establishing a complete report

The files of the children are often incomplete, which is a serious matter since this can lead to mistakes in the matching, involve suffering and problems for the child in his future, or even in the more serious cases end up in a breakdown of the adoptive relationship. Detailed reports and files are always needed, but they are particularly indispensable in the case of children with special needs (siblings, physical, mental, emotional or relational health problems). When the documentation on the children is insufficient, the competent authority of the State of origin should do the necessary to have it completed.

So that those responsible for the reports and studies can perform a good work, it is essential that the child protection authority promotes awareness of the problem and provides them with efficient tools (to adopt a standard procedure for questionnaires, to standardize documentation, to update their technical working instruments, to provide training) and the indispensable working environment (possibility of mobility, etc.)

Use of the report

This report will be delivered to the bodies responsible for matching, for confirming the agreement that the adoption process go forward (generally a body of the receiving State when it is an inter-country

adoption) and for the decision to adopt in order to help them to formulate a matching and then the adoption, in the best interests of the child and the family that will adopt him.

Furthermore, thanks to the elements of the file that will be transmitted, and to the child's Lifebook (see Fact sheet n° 12), the adoptive family should be able to get to know the child and his past experiences with a view to understanding him better, to welcome him and accompany him throughout his life. They will also be able to respond better to the questions that the child rises about his past.

Information about origins (particularly that which identifies the family of origin) and about the child's personal and family history must be kept safely by one of bodies responsible for adoption. This must be provided for in the legislation of the State of origin as well as the agencies responsible for supervising its implementation. If, later, the adoptee feels the need to know this information, when his age and stage of maturity allow it, they can be communicated to him with the appropriate psychosocial support and taking into account the rights of the family of origin and the legislation of the countries in question.

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For more information:

"Families by Law; an Adoption Reader"; CAHN Naomi R.; HEIFETZ HOLLINGER Joan; ROSS Catherine J.; KUNZEL Regina G. BEREBITSKY Julie; New York University Press, Washington Square, New York, NY 10003, USA; www.nyupress.org; 2004, 347 pp.

We are interested in your opinion! To tell us your experiences, ask us your questions about the themes addressed in this file, or to send us your suggestions for changes, don't hesitate to write to us at irc-cir@iss-ssi.org. We also invite you to share this file with other interested persons in your country. Thanks in advance!

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