



How to Assess the Reputation of Licensed, Private Adoption Agencies

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Child Welfare Information Gateway attempts to provide the most accurate, current information about the licensed, private agencies included in our National Foster Care & Adoption Directory. We make every attempt to ensure that an agency listed on our site is reputable. Because there are more than 2,000 licensed private agencies in the United States (with more than 700 listed as having intercountry adoption programs), it is difficult for Information Gateway to stay up-to-date on the operations of all agencies. Prospective adoptive parents should research the background of an agency before beginning the adoption process.

The following steps will help prospective adoptive parents assess the reputation of licensed, private adoption agencies:

- Contact the State Licensing Specialist in the state where the agency is located. The State Licensing Specialist will be able to tell you if the agency is in good standing, if there have been any complaints lodged against the agency and how long the agency has held the license. The State Licensing Office maintains complaint files as a public service.
- Contact the State's Attorney General's Office to see if any legal action has been taken against the agency. The Attorney General's office is a government office in the state capitol. You may find their contact information in Government section of the telephone book. Ask whether there is pending litigation against the agency or whether the agency has an established complaint file.
- Request at least three references from the agency. Ask them to provide you with the names and phone numbers of three clients whose adoptions were completed at least three years ago. You may ask those adoptive parents how the agency handled the adoption process, including post-adoption services. Ask these parents if they had any problems or concerns with agency.
- Join an adoptive parent support group in your area. In adoptive parent support groups, you can talk with other parents about their experience(s) with local agencies. You may encounter individuals who have worked with the agency you are considering. For a list of adoptive parent support groups in your area, and near the agency you are considering, search the National Foster Care & Adoption Directory. If there are several parent groups in your area, contact each of them to find out about their membership, activities, and any support services available, to find the one best for you.
- Contact the Better Business Bureau closest to the agency. The Better Business Bureau also provides a helpful tip sheet on "Using an Adoption Agency". Always ask the Better Business Bureau office staff person if that office covers the location of the agency and if their office takes complaints on adoption agencies. If they do not, then check with the State, City, or County Government Consumer Protection Office where the agency is located for complaints.

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