

## Bethany Christian Services of Northern California Understanding Adoption Fees....

Bethany Christian Services of Northern California sought licensure as a non-profit, child-placing adoption agency in order to offer adoption as an alternative to women who would choose life for their babies. Our first focus has been and remains on ministering to the woman who finds herself in an unplanned pregnancy - helping her understand the life-affirming options available to her and to her baby AND helping her make a loving and secure plan for her and her baby's future. On average, 60% of our clients choose to make adoption plans, and the other 40% choose to parent their children. Bethany Christian Services remains committed to offer a comprehensive, Christ centered ministry of excellence to birth parents, adoptive families and the children we serve.

### How is Bethany's ministry funded?

Bethany's income is from two primary sources - adoption service fees AND donations. Adoption service fees consist of fees paid by adopting families. About half of Bethany's yearly budget is subsidized by donor sources - individuals, fundraisers, churches, foundations and businesses. Fortunately, we are blessed by generous supporters who believe in Bethany's ministry. Without them, our adoption service fees would be nearly double! Unlike county or state agencies, or private agencies placing "waiting children" (special needs), Bethany does not any receive government funding.

### What do adoption fees cover?

Adoption fees are assessed for *services* provided, not for the child. Fees are determined by what is required to do a good job, based on legal requirements and ethical considerations. To accomplish the most permanent and secure adoptive placement possible, *all the following services* are needed in one form or another for each adoption plan.

- ❖ License to operate: to secure licensure as a child placing agency or agent, Bethany must secure and maintain professional staff with a high level of training, competency and credentials. Typically, Masters' level clinicians are hired.
- ❖ General office costs: As with any business, there are basic maintenance and operating costs. Expenses for the offices (the branch office and sub offices) include such things as office rent or mortgage costs, property maintenance, utilities, telephone service, computer service, postage, advertising, supplies, equipment, insurance and printing. Also there are costs for fundraising, transportation, payroll, administration (both local and national), and professional associations.
- ❖ Professional staff: State regulations require that adoption agencies be staffed by professional social work staff. Our birthparent and adoption counselors have degrees in social work, counseling, or human services. Most have advanced degrees with several years of experience.
- ❖ Birth parent counseling/support and financial support: Good adoption casework includes professional staff time spent preparing clients to understand their situation and their options, to prepare them for their plan and to help them make an informed decision about their future and their child's future. Often this counseling includes the extended family of birth parents as well. Services also includes providing pregnancy-related financial assistance to the birth mother, as well as assistance with housing, medical care, and coordinating with other social

- service providers. After adoptive placement, on-going counseling is also offered to birth families.
- ❖ **Legal Services:** Bethany is responsible to secure birth parental right terminations in each adoptive placement. Legal assistance is sought above and beyond case related work. This requires significant staff time and interfacing with the court system, our attorney, and the State Department of Social Services. Due to the legal nature of adoption, Bethany must also carry malpractice insurance.
  - ❖ **Adoption family preparation:** A “home study” or “Family Assessment” is required by the State for every adoptive placement. It serves these general purposes: preparing the family to parent a child through adoption; evaluating that the family environment is a safe and suitable place to receive a child through adoption; and supporting the family through the process of adopting. Professional staff time is given to interviews with the adopting family, visits to the home; phone contact and case/records management through the process. There are also costs related to educational materials and resources for adoptive families.
  - ❖ **Interim care if needed:** Bethany offers a period of time after the birth of the baby for a birth parent to review her decision before making a final plan. Good casework provides a safe place for the infant in that interim period to reduce pressure on the birth mother as she weighs her options and to provide an alternative if a family is not prepared to receive a child in the face of some uncertainty. Bethany has established relationships with several hospitals as a referral source for this important service; many of these referrals do become adoption plans. Interim care families must have a completed home assessment and on- going supervision and training to remain active and qualified.
  - ❖ **Open adoption mediation:** Bethany provides on-going services and support to birth families and adoptive families as they develop and continue their open adoption relationships through the life of the child.
  - ❖ **Finalization of adoption and post placement supervision:** After placement, caseworker supervisory time is required as the family adjusts to the new arrival in their home, including home visits, office interviews, and phone support. For finalization, staff prepare legal documentation for the courts and are involved in securing other legal documents related to the finalization of the adoption.
  - ❖ **Case management:** Licensed placement agencies are required to provide and maintain documentation for the state and for the record of all their placement activity. Additionally, permanent retention of all adoption files is a requirement by the state.
  - ❖ **Post adoption support:** Individual, as well as group support and education is offered to birth parents and adoptive families through the years beyond the adoption.

*In the future, we hope that you'll want to join other Bethany families by contributing to our non-profit (501c3) ministry. Financial support from our past adoptive families, their friends, their families, and churches greatly helps to offset the overall cost of providing all the services that Bethany provides.*

