

# Information for parents considering adoption of their child

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## Information for parents considering adoption of their child

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## Introduction

If you are considering having your child raised by another family, it is important that you understand the choices for the care of your child, including adoption.

Adoption is permanent. It is important that you consider all options before making a decision.

This booklet is mainly about adoption, but it covers other ways of raising your child including caring for your child yourself.

Your adoption counsellor will assist you to understand this booklet and give information to help you decide about your child's future.

## Choices in bringing up your child

When you are thinking about adoption for your child, there are a number of different arrangements you can consider for raising your child. One of these arrangements may be best suited to you and your child.

These arrangements include;

- raising the child yourself using supports and financial benefits available in your community.
- temporary care by another family until you have set up living arrangements, income benefits and other supports.
- permanent care of your child by other parents who may have a legal order such as a custody order, guardianship order or adoption order. When these orders exist they involve transfer of some or all of your legal rights as a parent.

More details of these arrangements are given on the following pages. This booklet cannot give sufficient information for you to assess which choice will suit you best, as circumstances and preferences will not be the same for all parents. Your counsellor will be able to give more detailed information and discuss the benefits and difficulties of each choice as they apply in your situation.

### **If your child is currently under Department of Human Services guardianship**

Your child may already be under the guardianship of the Department of Human Services if a magistrate has transferred your rights and responsibilities as a parent to the Secretary of the Department of Human Services. Your child may currently be placed in foster care or other accommodation.

You may now have decided that adoption is best for you and your child. The other ways of raising your child described in this booklet may therefore have already been tried. If you do feel that some possibilities have not been tried, you should discuss this with the adoption counsellor or your worker at the Department of Human Services regional office.

Much of this booklet applies to your situation. Your adoption counsellor will talk with you about further plans for visiting your child and any particular issues relating to the placement of your child.

## Assistance available in caring for your child yourself

You may feel that you are not able to raise your child yourself because you lack money or support. This, on its own, does not mean that you have to consider adoption.

Assistance and support is available to help parents care for and raise their child. This includes financial assistance, accommodation, and day-care services. Supporting parents' benefits and housing schemes for single parents may be available or it may be possible to find suitable employment and use day-care services to care for your child.

A list of the types of support services is found at the end of this booklet. Your counsellor will give you names and addresses of services relevant to your situation.

## What placements are available for children?

There are a number of types of placements available for children which you can consider for your child.

### Temporary care arrangements

#### Foster care

Foster care means that another family cares for a child for a period of time. The placement is arranged by a foster care agency, and the service is available to parents who are having difficulties caring for their child. If the placement is voluntary, the parent remains the child's legal guardian and is encouraged to visit the child regularly.

You may wish to consider placing your child in foster care for a period of time while you work towards caring for your child yourself. In considering this type of care, it is important that you also consider the effect that a period of separation may have on your relationship with your child.

For this reason, foster care agencies will usually limit placements to several weeks, and expect that parents have a plan of what needs to be achieved during the time the child is in foster care. This is intended to ensure the child can be returned to the parents' care at the agreed time. If you are interested in foster care, your counsellor and the foster care agency will help you work out a suitable plan.



## Permanent arrangements

Permanent arrangements for the care of a child refer to situations where a child is cared for on a permanent basis by someone other than the birth parents.

A legal order is used to make clear the rights and responsibilities of the birth parents and the child's care-givers.

## Parenting Order

The Family Court may grant a Parenting Order which formalises arrangements around all aspects of the parenting of the child. A Parenting Order has a number of components;

- residence: stating who is to provide residence for the child
- contact: stating arrangements for the child's contact with other people
- specific issues: stating any other matter the Court may include

The Parenting Order can be designed to suit the individual circumstances of the parties. The Court will consider what is in the child's best interests.

Any person concerned with the care, welfare or development of the child may apply for a Parenting Order.

Because residence is a very important issue in the care of a child, the Family Court requires that when a person other than a parent makes an application, the parties must attend a conference with a family consultant, and the Court considers a report by the consultant.

A Parenting Order does not affect the child's birth certificate or inheritance rights, although the child's name may be changed.

Parenting Orders include obligations on the parties involved, and parties must comply with the terms of the order.

The Family Court no longer uses terms such as custody, access and guardianship. These have been replaced by the broader concept of parental responsibility, which covers everything a parent normally does in raising a child.

## Adoption Order

- Adoption Orders are usually granted in the County Court.
- The granting of an Adoption Order means that the child's adoptive parents become the legal parents.
- The order affects;
  - child's name
  - birth certificate and
  - inheritance rights
- The Adoption Order usually includes arrangements for contact between the child and the birth parent(s) or other relatives, and/or exchange of information about the child.
- Application may be made to the Court to establish or vary conditions around ongoing contact or information exchange.
- An application to discharge an Adoption Order can be made if special circumstances exist or if a birth parent's consent was obtained by improper means.
- Adoption arrangements may only be made through adoption agencies.

## What is the adoption process?

The following diagram is an overview of the full adoption process, each step of which is discussed more fully in the following pages:

Contact with Adoption Agency

Counselling

Arranging for Temporary Care of the Child

Consent to Adoption

Selection of Adoptive Family and Placement of Child

Support of Child's Placement

Legalisation of Placement—Granting of an Adoption Order

Contact and Information Exchange

## What are the steps in the adoption process?

### Contact with adoption agency

Parents considering adoption for their child usually approach an adoption agency. Sometimes another person, for example, a hospital social worker, may make the initial enquiry and referral to the agency on behalf of the parents. The adoption agency will then make direct contact with the parents.

Contact with the adoption agency may take place before or after the child is born or when the child is older.

Contact with the agency is confidential.

### Counselling

A counsellor from the adoption agency will discuss all the possible options for caring for your child with you. Written information is given, in the form of this booklet. Referrals to other agencies or services may be arranged.

Adoption counsellors are legally approved to arrange adoptions in Victoria. The purpose of counselling is to assist you in making an informed decision about options for the care of your child by providing support and information, and by assisting in exploring relevant issues.

Your counsellor will want to obtain information from you for the child later in life. It is considered to be in the best interests of children to know as much as possible about their parents.

When you are thinking about adoption, your counsellor will also talk to you about the long-term consequences for both you and your child. It is important for you to realise that parents who give consent to the adoption of their child often experience feelings of grief and loss. These feelings are very normal and may last for many years. Believing that they have made the right decision for themselves and their child may assist parents in resolving their feelings of grief.

There are also self-help groups and counselling agencies which can help you in dealing with your feelings about adoption. Your counsellor will discuss these services with you.

Sometimes adoption agencies are approached by both parents and at other times it is the mother only who attends for counselling. It is important that you are aware that if you intend proceeding with adoption and the adoption counsellor is told the name or whereabouts of someone who may be the father of the child, the counsellor must, by law, attempt to make contact and tell him of the plans for adoption. If you have particular concerns about contact being made with your child's father, it is important that you discuss these with your counsellor.

Wherever possible, both parents are involved in planning for their children.

## **Who looks after my child before the adoptive placement?**

If you are seriously considering adoption, arrangements can be made for the temporary care of your child before you give consent to adoption. This ensures that, for example, new-born babies do not have to stay in hospital longer than is medically necessary. As you would still be the parent of the child at this stage, it will be necessary for you to authorise the adoption agency to arrange for the care of your child. To do this you sign a form called a child care agreement.

The adoption agency will then arrange a pre-adoptive foster care placement for your child. Your child will not be placed with an adoptive family at this stage, but will remain with the foster care family until the end of the period during which you can withdraw consent.

If you decide not to proceed with signing consent, or later withdraw consent, the child is returned to your care.

## **Can I visit my child in foster care?**

If you sign a child care agreement and your child is placed in foster care, you have the right to make regular visits to your child. Specific arrangements for visiting will be discussed between you and your counsellor and the foster care agency.

The adoption agency will discuss arrangements for further visits once the period for withdrawing your consent has ended.

## Consent to adoption

When adoption consent is signed and becomes final, you give up all your rights and responsibilities as a parent.

Consent to adoption cannot be given until sixteen days after the birth of the child. This booklet must be given to the parent(s) at least seven days before consent is signed. This is to make sure that you have enough time to think about all the information in this booklet and to consider the alternatives to adoption.

If you consent to the adoption of your child, it is expected that you understand the effects of an adoption order. No other person should have influenced your decision by using threats or undue pressure.

### Who needs to sign consent?

Sometimes both parents attend counselling and sign consent and at other times only the mother is involved. The law requires that if the father of the child is known, the adoption agency will try to involve him in the discussion about adoption and ascertain his wishes about signing consent. He must be informed when the mother has signed an adoption consent. He then has the opportunity to legally establish that he is the father. This will be established automatically if his name is on the birth certificate. If he has established that he is the father he will need to sign an adoption consent before the child can be adopted.

In some cases the court may dispense with the need to notify the father. The court may also dispense with the need for the father to sign consent in certain situations.

### How is consent given?

Consent is given in the presence of a court official and the counsellor from the adoption agency. This takes place at an office of the County Court or, in the country at the County and Magistrates Court. Your counsellor will explain the arrangements for giving consent and will be able to provide you with copies of the forms which are to be signed. The counsellor and the court official need to be certain that you understand the ways in which you and your child will be affected if you give consent to adoption.

## Can I express any wishes about the adoptive parents?

You can express in writing your wishes about the religion, race and ethnic background of the adoptive parents. You can do this at any time before or after you sign consent to adoption, but before placement with the adoptive family. The adoption agency must carefully consider your wishes and try to find a suitable family for your child. You cannot name specific people you would like to be adoptive parents for your child. However, at the end of the period for revoking consent, you may, if you wish, express a preference for a family from a small number of non-identifying descriptions of approved families suggested by the agency.

## Can I express wishes about contact and information exchange?

After signing an adoption consent you are given the opportunity to indicate your wishes in writing:

- whether you and/or a relative want contact with the child after adoption and, if so, how often
- whether you would like information about your child to be provided after the adoption and, if so, how often
- whether you would like the conditions for contact and information exchange included in the adoption order

Your wishes are carefully considered by the adoption agency when placing the child; and by the court when granting an adoption order.

Contact and information exchange are discussed in more detail later in this booklet.

## Can I be notified of certain events?

You may also indicate whether you wish to be told of the following events:

- the end of the time during which the consent can be revoked
- the placement of the child with parents who expect to adopt the child
- the date when an adoption order is made by the court
- if the child leaves the care of the parents who had expected to adopt the child
- if the child dies before an adoption order is made

The first three events listed above are a usual part of the adoption process. However, the other two events are very uncommon. If you choose to be told about any of these events, you will sign a form and be notified in writing.

## What forms will I receive after the consent is signed?

If you give consent to adoption you will be given:

- a completed copy of the consent forms
- a form for revoking consent
- a form for extending the time for revoking consent

The forms include instructions for revoking consent or extending the time in which you can revoke consent. The adoption agency will give any help you need to complete these forms.

## Who is legally responsible for my child after I give consent to adoption?

- Once all necessary consents are given, the legal guardianship of the child transfers from you to either:
  - The Secretary of the Department of Human Services if the parent has attended counselling at the Department of Human Services; or
  - The Principal Officer of a non-government adoption agency, if the parent has attended counselling at that agency.



A member of staff from the adoption agency will have the day-to-day responsibility for managing your child's situation.

## Revoking your consent or extending the period during which consent can be revoked

Having your child adopted is an important and life-long decision. You are given the opportunity to change your mind within a period of twenty-eight days after the day you gave consent to adoption.

By revoking your consent your child is no longer able to be adopted.

The normal time you have in which to revoke consent is twenty-eight days. You can add up to fourteen days to the twenty-eight day period if you are uncertain about your decision. (For example, if you add ten days you will have thirty-eight days after the day you consent to adoption in which you can revoke your consent.)

Adding another fourteen days could be helpful in clarifying your thoughts or you may wish to revoke your consent while you think more about your decision.

Once the period for revoking consent has passed your consent is final.

You are no longer the legal parent of the child.

When you give consent, certain procedures are followed, as required by law. In the same way, there are certain steps you must follow if you want to extend the time in which you can revoke your consent or if you want to revoke your consent altogether.

## What are the steps for extending the time in which I can revoke consent?

- Decide how many days you want to add to the twenty-eight day period. (You cannot add more than fourteen days).
- Fill in the form for extending the period for revoking consent but do not sign it. (You must use this form. Obtain one from the adoption agency if necessary.)
- The form must be witnessed by a person over the age of 18 years, and you need to follow the instructions on the form. The person does not have to see what is written on the form. They only have to witness your signature.

- Hand deliver or post the form by certified mail to:  
The Registrar of the County Court,  
250 William Street,  
MELBOURNE 3000.
- The form must be received by the Registrar within seven days after the form is signed.
- You are also advised to contact the adoption agency as soon as possible after you extend the time in which you can revoke consent.

### How do I revoke consent?

Fill out the form for revoking consent and post or deliver it to:

The Registrar of the County Court,  
250 William Street,  
MELBOURNE 3000

If you do not have a copy of the form, write a letter giving your name, address and date of birth, and your child's name, date and place of birth, and the date that consent was given. You should state that you are revoking your consent to the adoption of your child.

The form or letter must be witnessed by a person over the age of 18 years. The person does not have to see what you have written. They only have to witness your signature.

You must deliver the form or letter personally or post it by certified mail.

If you post it by certified mail, allow three to four days for delivery as the Registrar of the County Court must receive the notice before the end of the period for revoking consent.

### If the child is older

When adoption is arranged for an older child, the child must be counselled by an adoption worker regarding the effects of an adoption, and their wishes must be ascertained, and considered.

A written report regarding this must be provided to the court. This applies to children of about primary school age and above.

## Selection of adoptive parents

Adoption agencies carefully assess all prospective adoptive parents and consider factors such as age, health, finances, and family relationships. Families attend education sessions to familiarise themselves with adoption issues and are then assessed as to their suitability to become adoptive parents by the adoption agency.

Your adoption agency will give you the opportunity to consider a number of approved adoptive families who have been assessed as suitable for your child, and to indicate the family with whom you would like your child to be placed. The final decision is made by the adoption agency. If you do not wish to express a preference, the agency's placement committee will make the selection.

### Can I meet the adoptive family before placement?

If you wish, prior to the child's placement, you may meet with the adoptive parents who are selected for your child.

## Placement of the child

After the end of the period for revoking consent, the adoptive parents are introduced to the child, and the child is placed with them shortly afterwards.

In straightforward situations, and depending on when you signed the adoption consent, the placement of your child with the adoptive family will probably occur about 2–3 months after all the necessary consents are signed.

### Placement support

After placement, the adoptive family and child are supported by the adoption agency. An adoption worker visits the family for a period of time to ensure that the placement is progressing well. The agency also helps the birth parents make arrangements about contact and exchange of information about the child.

### Legalisation of placement

After a period of about twelve months, the adoption agency recommends that the placement progress to legalisation. An application is made to the County Court and an adoption order is granted.

## Once an Adoption Order is granted

The Court makes decisions about adoption orders. The granting of an adoption order causes major legal changes affecting your relationship with your child, namely:

- **Transfer of rights**

Once an adoption order is granted, the child is treated in law in every way as the child of the parents who adopt the child. Your rights and responsibilities as a parent are given to the adoptive parents. An adoption order is permanent.

- **Inheritance**

After adoption, your child is entitled to inherit from the adoptive parents as if the child was born to them. Your child may only inherit from you or your relatives if named in your will or the will of a relative.

If an adopted person has been included in the will of a birth parent or relative and their adopted name is not known, the State Trustee will make enquiries of relevant adoption agencies to find out the name of the adopted person.

- **Names of the child**

After adoption the child may have new names. When an adoption order is made, the Court approves the names of the child specified in the adoption application. The surname is usually the surname of the parents applying to adopt. They also select given names which may be new names, or names the child is known by.

If your child is an older child, the Court will take the preference of the child into account in approving the child's name. These matters are discussed by the adoption agency before the adoption application is taken to Court. Usually an older child retains his or her original first name.

- **New birth certificate**

After adoption, your child receives a new birth certificate which includes the names of the adoptive parents.

- **Rights of birth parents**

The law allows birth parents to have some rights after an adoption order is made. It entitles you to information about your child after the order is made. The order may also make provision for you to have direct contact with your child. These arrangements are outlined in more detail in the next section.

## **Right to the original birth certificate**

At any time before or after an adoption order is made you can apply to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages for a certified copy of your child's birth certificate.

A certified copy of a birth certificate gives full details of the child's birth. This includes the child's name, date and place of birth, sex, full details of the birth parents and any of their other children, and details of the hospital.

The birth certificate may be the only official evidence that you are the birth parent of your child.

To obtain a copy of or extract from your child's original birth certificate you should apply either in writing or in person to:

The Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages,  
Ground Floor, 589 Collins Street,  
MELBOURNE, 3000

You may also contact them by using the link on the website:

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au>

If applying in writing, you will need to state the following details: the child's full name; date and place of birth; and the full names of both parents, including the maiden name of the mother if married.

## Access and information exchange

After placement, contact between the child and yourself (and anyone else named in wishes documents you sign) can take the form of direct contact (called access) and/or information exchange. You may request both types of contact. Access is usually a meeting of one to two hours in a neutral place, with the adoptive parents and the child. Information exchange is usually between you, the adoptive parents and the child and may include photographs, letters, school reports, etc.

Ongoing contact can have benefits for both the child and parents. The purpose of ongoing contact is to assist the child's identity development, and to reassure parents of the child's development within the adoptive family.

### Expressing preferences about access and information exchange

At the time you express your wishes regarding frequency of access and information exchange, you may also indicate whether you want your child placed with people who agree to have these wishes included in the adoption order.

It is also possible for you to have a private arrangement with the adoptive parents regarding access and information exchange. This means that you and the adoptive parents decide about the frequency of access and information exchange, with the assistance of the adoption agency, but that the agreement is not included in the adoption order.

### Placing conditions regarding access and information exchange on the adoption order

The adoption order may include conditions around access and information exchange. The Judge decides whether to include conditions regarding access and information exchange on the adoption order, and the amount of access. The Court will be guided by consideration of the best interests of the child, and that there is agreement between the parties. The order may contain conditions about access, or information exchange, or both.

## If you later wish to vary the arrangement

Any arrangements (whether in the adoption order or not) may be varied if you and the adoptive parents agree following granting of an adoption order.

If access and information exchange provisions are included in the adoption order you, the adoptive parents, the child or a person acting for the child, may apply to the court at any time after the order is made to change or cancel these provisions.

If access and information exchange provisions are not included in the adoption order you, the adoptive parents, the child or a person acting for the child, may apply to the court at any time after the order is made to have conditions for access or information exchange included in the order.

However, the court will only vary an adoption order if it is satisfied that any change is in the best interests of the child. The court cannot grant new or additional levels of access unless the adoptive parents agree and the wishes of an older child have been taken into account. In addition, the court must be provided with a report from an approved counsellor, before altering the adoption order.

## Assistance with contact

Contact works best when all parties show good will and participate in letter exchange and meetings.

The adoption agency will arrange access visits until the birth parents and adoptive parents feel comfortable about managing the arrangements themselves. The agency worker may attend visits.

The aim is for the birth family and adoptive family to work towards managing arrangements independently, after the adoption order is granted.

If there are any difficulties experienced with access arrangements, the birth and adoptive parents are encouraged to seek assistance from the adoption agency.

Information can be exchanged through the adoption agency until the birth parents and adoptive parents feel comfortable about exchanging surnames and phone numbers.

If the adoption agency organises the information exchange, it is important that parties keep the agency informed of their current contact details.

Making and maintaining access arrangements requires a responsible and sensitive approach by everyone involved. If you want to change the arrangements, it is important that you think about the effect of the changes on all those involved. This is particularly important where a birth parent wants to resume contact with a child after a long period without access.

It is expected that birth parents and adoptive parents will inform each other of any change they wish to make and attempt to negotiate the proposed changes. The adoption agency can assist with this.

## **Adoption of an Aboriginal child**

The parent of an Aboriginal child, who is considering adoption, is encouraged to make contact with an Aboriginal Child Care Agency who is able to provide support, advice and counselling.

The parent of an Aboriginal child may state that they wish to have the child placed for adoption within the Aboriginal community. In addition, the consent can be signed on the condition that the parent or members of the Aboriginal community or relatives named in the consent form have the right to visit the child.

If you are the parent of an Aboriginal child you may include in the consent form:

- whether or not you want access with the child
- how often you want access with the child
- which relatives you want to have access with the child
- how often you want the relative to have access with the child, and
- whether you want members of the Aboriginal community to have access with the child.

The Aboriginal Child Care Agency is able to help parents, relatives and members of the Aboriginal community with access arrangements.



The adoption agency must notify the parents in writing if their conditions for access cannot be met or no suitable adoptive parents are available within the Aboriginal community. If you receive a notice from the adoption agency you then have twenty-eight days during which you can revoke your consent or change your conditions for access.

If you want to change your conditions for access, you can use the form which is sent to you with the notice by the adoption agency. The adoption agency will give you help to fill in the form. The form should be sent to:

The Registrar of the County Court  
250 William Street  
MELBOURNE 3000

If you want to revoke consent, you can use the form to revoke consent sent to you with the notice. The form must be delivered or posted to the County Court within twenty-eight days after receiving the notice.

If the parent(s) decides not to see an Aboriginal Agency's adoption worker, the Adoption Agency, with due regard to issues of confidentiality, will inform the Aboriginal agency, from the first contact, that an Aboriginal child may become available for adoption in the future.

## **Adoption by a step-parent or relative**

The Adoption Act 1984 provides for the adoption of a child by a step-parent or relative. In considering such an application, the court must be satisfied that three conditions are met. These are:

- (a) that a Family Court order would not make adequate provision for the welfare and interests of the child; and
- (b) exceptional circumstances exist which warrant the making of an adoption order; and
- (c) an adoption order would make better provision for the welfare and interests of the child.

In general, using the provisions of the Family Law Act is the most appropriate way to provide legal recognition to care-giving arrangements within families. Adoption by relatives is rarely used, because of the potential for confusion and distortion of existing family relationships. An appropriate parenting order can be applied for through the Family Court and a solicitor undertakes the proceedings. Before making an adoption application, applicants should consider the impact of the Family Law Act which states that the Family Court may grant leave for proceedings to be commenced for the adoption of a child by a prescribed adopting parent. This provision covers step-parent adoptions. When leave is granted, any rights of custody, guardianship or access which existed prior to the adoption will cease. When leave is not granted, the non-custodial birth parent retains rights in relation to the child, severely limiting the effect of the adoption order.

Where a child is to be adopted by a relative or a step-parent, the name of the adoptive parent is included on the consent form. This is the only situation where a birth parent can name the adoptive parent(s) on the consent form.

After consent has been given for a relative or step-parent to adopt a child, the child cannot be adopted by anyone other than the named person(s) on the consent form.

The child's legal status is not changed at the time the consent is signed. The child does not come under the guardianship of the Secretary of Department of Human Services or the Principal Officer of an approved adoption agency. The parent who gives consent does not relinquish parental rights or responsibilities until an Adoption Order is granted.

Where an Adoption Order is granted to a step-parent who is married to the custodial parent, the law regards both of these parents as the legal parents of the child. The custodial parent does not lose any of their rights as a parent. The other parent of the child (that is, the parent who is no longer caring for the child) is no longer treated in law as the child's parent. All the usual effects of an Adoption Order would apply once an Adoption Order is made.

More detailed information is provided in the separate brochure 'Stepchildren and Adoption'.

The child must be counselled by an adoption worker to ensure they understand the effects of an adoption, and their wishes must be considered. A written report regarding these issues must be provided to the court.

## **Adoption information service and register**

Adoption information services are provided by the Department of Human Services and approved adoption agencies. These services provide information to eligible applicants regarding past adoptions, and may also assist them to find relatives from whom they have been separated by adoption.

A record of all applicants is kept on the Central Register. Adopted persons, birth parents, adoptive parents, birth relatives and adult children of adopted persons may register their wishes regarding exchange of information or access, or apply to receive information about the adoption.

Before information or documents are given to applicants, they must attend an interview with an approved counsellor. If the agreement of other persons is necessary before release of information, this must be in writing.

Adult adopted persons may receive a copy of the adoption records and a copy of their original birth certificate.

Adopted persons under the age of 18 years need their adoptive parent's agreement before obtaining any information. To obtain identifying information, they need the agreement of their birth parents as well.

Birth parents may obtain non-identifying information about the adopted person. Identifying information may only be given where the adult adopted person agrees. If the adopted person is under eighteen years, the agreement of adoptive parents is required and views of the adopted child must be considered.

Adoptive parents may obtain information about the adopted person's background but identifying information is not given without the agreement of the birth parent.

Birth relatives may initially only be given non-identifying information. Identifying information can be provided only with consent of the adult adopted person. If the adopted person is under eighteen years, the adoptive parents must agree and the adopted person's wishes must be considered.

Adult children of adopted persons have the same rights to information as adopted persons. However, the adopted person must be informed of the enquiry or evidence of death of the adopted person provided.

## Services and resources available to parents

There are a number of organisations that provide services to parents. These services are designed to support parents as they raise their children. Your counsellor will discuss with you some of the services that could assist you if your child is not placed for adoption.

### Financial support

- pensions or benefits provided by the Commonwealth or State Government, such as Parenting Payments
- concessions to reduce costs of transport (fares) and government charges such as rates, gas and electricity
- employment services for assistance with part/full-time work

### Accommodation support

- public housing services

### Parenting support

- community health centres
- early childhood development programs
- family or individual counselling
- hospitals, doctors
- family aides
- home help
- parenting skills education programs
- community and neighbourhood houses
- play groups

## Self-help organisations

- Council of Single Mothers and Children
- Association for Relinquishing Mothers, ARMS

## Day care

- family day care
- pre-school centres
- after school programs
- day care centres
- private child care arrangements

## Foster care

- respite
- emergency
- short-term

## Education services

- part-time or full-time courses for parents to increase earning capacity or develop interests

## Recreational Services for Parents and Children

- local government
- community clubs

## Aboriginal services

- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, VACCA
- local Aboriginal services

## **Services for children with behavioural or physical disabilities or delay**

- SCOPE
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Disability Services, Department of Human Services
- Specialist Children's Services, Department of Human Services

## **Local organisations providing family support services**

In addition to the general organisations that provide family support services your counsellor will discuss with you some of the local services that could assist you if your child is not placed for adoption.



