

INITIAL ENQUIRY WHERE ADOPTED PERSON IS UNDER 18

Adoption Act 2000 (ss134-136) & Adoption Regulation 2003 (cls 46-48)

Fact Sheet

WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE WHEN THE ADOPTED PERSON IS UNDER 18?

A child needs information about their background to develop a healthy sense of their own identity. While not all adoptions involve contact between birth and adoptive families, it is still **very important to maintain openness** within the adoptive family to discuss adoption issues.

Although “identifying” information about the birth family is not available until the adopted person turns 18, birth families, adoptive families and adopted people **may still be able to communicate, meet, and build relationships while the child is under 18**, as long as everyone agrees.

Each person has different feelings about how much contact or news they would like. The Adoption Information Unit (AIU) can assist birth and adoptive families to stay in touch, for example, by facilitating the exchange of letters/emails, sending photographs or by face to face meetings. The exchange of news and contact usually begins with the support of the adoption caseworker involved, but can progress to direct contact between the parties if everyone agrees.

One of the functions of AIU is to assist with communication and provide support.

- There is an Initial Inquiry Form on pages 5 - 6.
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Information Exchange and Support

Services offered by the Adoption Information Unit

1. Exchange of Information

AIU can co-ordinate the exchange of information such as: letters, emails, photographs, cards, small gifts videos and DVDs. Birth parents can be reassured about the health and progress of their child and adoptive children can keep in touch with what is happening in their birth family. This helps relationships to develop between the two families.

2. Meetings

- AIU may be able to help arrange meetings between birth and adoptive families.
- This service may also be provided for intercountry adoptions - facilitating contact between the adoptive family and the Adoption Service Provider or foster family in the adopted person's overseas country.
- The privacy of all persons is respected however positive relationships can develop when people decide to exchange identifying details. In this case, people can stay in touch without AIU's involvement. AIU Caseworkers can continue to support and offer any assistance if needed.

3. Contact after a long time – seeking current information

- Even if there has been no contact between the adopted person and birth family for a long time, it may be possible for AIU to obtain and pass on current information about the other person and/or establish arrangements for ongoing correspondence exchange or meetings. AIU will discuss your request with you.

4. Outreach for teenagers

AIU receives many enquiries from adoptive parents of teenagers as well as independent enquiries from young people. There are a number of reasons for requesting information at this time:



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- As at any age, an adopted person might want to know that their parents/siblings are alive and well, to see them or to have photographs and information about them.
- An adopted person may have difficulty coping with a particular aspect of their adoption and may need some answers from their birth parents.
- Sometimes a young person may no longer be living with their adoptive parents and this situation might serve as a trigger for wanting to find out about their birth family.
- Outreach for medical information. This can be made when:
 - i. Adoptive parents or the child's doctor have a need for information about the child's medical history to help with diagnosis or treatment of a medical condition.
 - ii. An adopted person develops a medical condition which is not part of the original birth family history provided, and it is important for the birth family to find out about it.
 - iii. A birth parent becomes aware of medical information in their family some time after the adoption has occurred and there are implications for the future well-being of the adopted child.

5. Counselling

There are a variety of situations in which counselling is offered:

- After a period of time has passed since the adoption, birth parents may seek assistance from AIU about dealing with ongoing feelings of loss or sadness about the adoption or other adoption related issues like telling their spouse or other children about the adoption.
- Adoptive parents may need support in telling their child of his/her adoption, passing on difficult information, or in dealing with their child's sadness about being adopted and separated from their birth family.
- When adopted children reach adolescence, adoptive parents find this to be a time when they need support and advice from AIU.

The counselling service in AIU is limited and referrals will be made, where appropriate, to other services that are experienced in helping people with adoption issues.

6. Adoption Plans

If the Adoption Order was made after February 2003, there may be an Adoption Plan to which the birth family and adoptive family have agreed. The Adoption Plan is part of the adoption application that is lodged at the Supreme Court at the time of the adoption. The Adoption Plan outlines how contact between the birth and adoptive families will take place including how information such as letters and photos will be shared and how meetings may occur. Where there is no adoption plan, AIU can help families to arrange contact and exchange information that is agreed on by everyone.

7. Non-identifying information

AIU can provide non-identifying information compiled at the time of adoption.

- For birth parents, this is information about their child's health and placement and some details about the adoptive parents.
- For adopted children and their adoptive parents, this is information about the child's background, including all medical information available.

Please note

Applications cannot be accepted by email or other electronic means.



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For further information

**Adoption Information Unit
Community Services Division
NSW Department of Family and Community Services**

office hours Monday-Friday, 9.00am-5.00pm

telephone 1300 799 023 cost of local call within NSW & ACT
02 9716 3005 from other states
+61 2 9716 3005 from overseas

email adoption.information@facs.nsw.gov.au

website www.community.nsw.gov.au/adoption

postal address
Adoption Information Unit
Locked Bag 4028
ASHFIELD NSW 2131
AUSTRALIA

street address
Adoption Information Unit
4-6 Cavill Ave
ASHFIELD NSW 2131
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CHECKLIST BEFORE POSTING YOUR APPLICATION

Please tick to show **ALL** documents below are **CERTIFIED** and attached to your Application

The Certifier must note on the copied Document: *"the document is a true copy of the original Document"*
Examples of Certifiers are Justice of the Peace, Police Officer, Solicitor, Clerk of the Court, Chemist

- Completed and signed Application Form** filled in with as many details as you can provide
- Birth Certificate**
- Any 2** of the following **certified identification** documents **at least one of which must contain your current signature**:
 - Passport
 - Current photo Driver Licence
 - Medicare Card
 - Photo Card (Proof of Age)
 - Health Care Card
 - Pension Card
 - Veterans' Affairs Card
 - Order of Adoption
- If you have changed your name have you included all the certified documentation showing how you have come to use your current name**
 - Marriage Certificate
 - Change of Name or Deed Poll Certificate
 - Statutory Declaration showing your change of name/s

POST YOUR COMPLETED APPLICATION TO

**Adoption Information Unit
Locked Bag 4028
ASHFIELD NSW 2131
AUSTRALIA**

Have a question?

Contact the Adoption Information Unit
Telephone 1300 799 023 or 02 9716 3005

Please note

As you will appreciate, we are unable to process your Application
until ALL required certified documentation detailed above is received.

Applications cannot be accepted by email or other electronic means.

We thank you for your understanding and co-operation.



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Initial Enquiry Form

for an adopted person, birth parent, adoptive parent
and adopted person is under 18

SECTION 1 – Information about you

Surname (current)	Title (Mr Mrs Ms)		
First name			
Middle name			
Date of birth	/	/	
Home address			Postcode
Postal address			Postcode
E-mail address			
Phone numbers	Home:	Work:	Mobile:
Are you	<input type="checkbox"/> Adopted person	<input type="checkbox"/> Birth parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Adoptive parent
Are you	<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Torres Strait Islander	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Indigenous
	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know		

SECTION 2 – Information about the adoption

please just provide whatever information you know or remember

Date of Birth of the adopted person	/	/	
Place of Birth (hospital)			
Was the adopted person a State Ward or in Out-of-Home Care?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know
Birth mother's name when the adopted person was born	Surname: First & middle names:		
Other names used by the birth mother (e.g. maiden name, alias)	Surname(s): First name(s):		
Birth father's name when the adopted person was born	Surname(s): First & middle names:		
Adopted person's name before adoption			
Adopted person's name after adoption			
Adoptive parents' names	Surname(s): Mother's first names: Father's first names:		
Adoptive parents' address when the Adoption Order was made			



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SECTION 3 - Reason for this Enquiry

How may we help you?

SECTION 4 - Declaration

Please tick the relevant boxes

- I, the person named in Section 1, declare that to the best of my knowledge the particulars shown above are true and correct.
- I acknowledge that it is an offence (under the Adoption Act 2000) punishable by 25 penalty units or twelve months imprisonment or both, to knowingly make any false statement in connection with this application.
- I understand that it is my responsibility to keep the Adoption Information Unit (AIU) informed in writing of any changes to my contact details and that if I notify AIU of any changes I must also provide certified copies of proof of identity documents. This is to ensure that AIU can contact me should the need arise.

Signed _____

Date / /