



## BIRTH PARENT/ ADOPTIVE CHILD SEARCH IN MISSOURI

The Family Services Department at Lutheran Family and Children's Services (LFC) offers the following information to help you understand the steps involved in the release of adoption record information.

### **Information concerning any adoption finalized in Missouri is protected by state law:**

A request for information must be in writing, contain verification of your identity (photo ID) and should specify whether you are seeking non-identifying and/or identifying information. *(You may use the Request of the Adopted Adult letter.)* Persons requesting information must be 18 years of age and must have a direct relationship to the adoption.

**Non-identifying information** can be released to an adult adoptee or an adoptive parent upon their written request to the agency OR the court. The fee at LFC is **\$150.00**. Your payment should be submitted with your letter of request in the form of a personal check, cashier's check or money order payable to Lutheran Family and Children's Services of Missouri.

**Requests for identifying information should be sent to the court that finalized the adoption.** *(Contact person and court address are listed on the Request of the Adopted Adult letter.)* The court will then authorize the agency to conduct a search for the birth parent. **We cannot begin a search without the court authorization.** A notarized consent of the birth parent is necessary to release identifying information. In most situations, this requires that the agency research, or "search," for current information on the birth parent. Our fee for the first 10 hours of searching is **\$450.00** and \$65.00 for each additional hour. Most searches can be completed within the initial 10 hours. You will be contacted for approval if additional time is necessary to complete the search.

A **non-identifying letter** written by you to explain, in your own words, your motivation and expectations can be helpful in making the initial contact with your birth family. The letter need not be lengthy, but must be non-identifying—no names, dates, or names of places can be included. However, you may include information about yourself, your adoption, your current family and a list of questions that you would like answered, regardless of their decision about the release of their identifying information. You may include questions about medical history, as well as questions about nationality and family background. Some of this information may be included in the summary of non-identifying information. In most situations, the medical information from the record is not

current and only birth parents can provide updated information. If you have specific medical concerns and questions, please include them in your letter.

**Information on siblings** may also be requested. The court will need to authorize the agency to begin that process as well. Information can only be released if that sibling gives signed, notarized consent.

Please see our recommended reading list **written on adoption search and reunion**. LFCS can never guarantee the outcome of a search or contact and so it is important to prepare yourself for whatever the result. It is an emotional journey and the more you understand about the possibilities, the easier it will be to experience. All books can be found at your local bookstore, library, or online.

If you have not already done so, we recommend entering your information in the **Missouri Adoption Registry**. Should your birth parent(s) also be registered, the Registry will contact you, your birth parent(s), the court and the agency to advise that a match has been made and facilitate the reunion.

For any additional questions, please contact the Adoption Search Team at Lutheran Family and Children's Services of Missouri at 314-787-5100.

Sincerely,

*LFCS Adoption Search Team*