

Domestic Infant Adoption at Barker

All of Barker's Domestic Infant Adoption Program options provide prospective parents guidance and training in addition to clinical and administrative support from the first information session through finalization of the adoption.

We encourage all families who are interested in adopting to attend one of our monthly general information sessions. Following that session, you can contact a member of the Domestic Infant team by phone or email if you have questions or want to explore your options further through a paid in-person consultation.

If you decide Barker Adoption Foundation is a good fit for your adoption plans, the next step is to submit an application. Our clinical team meets weekly to review all applications received.

All adoptive parents participate in intake meetings, which are both clinical and administrative in nature. During these meetings, Barker staff will share information about Barker's comprehensive process, the needs of the children available for adoption, guidance on whether local placement, out of area placement or both are a better fit for the family, and the paperwork requirements for the home study. We will also explore the adoptive parents' motivation and initial preparedness to become an adoptive parent.

Domestic Adoption Options

There are three broad paths that Barker families pursue in infant adoption: 1) working in our in-area program where Barker counselors are supporting local expectant parents, 2) working with an agency or adoption law firm that serves birth parents in another part of the country, or 3) working independently with an attorney for a private adoption.

Regardless of the options pursued, Barker provides education, home study and support services to all of our families. Some families know immediately what option they will pursue when applying and many others begin exploring what option(s) is a best fit for them during their initial meetings. Most families decide which option(s) to pursue by the time their home study meetings begin.

At intake you will be introduced to the various members of our staff who will support you along the way. You will also be introduced to your Support Specialist who will work with you throughout the process, often from behind the scenes, all the way through the home study approval. During the first month or two, you will collect materials required for a home study as required by your state of residence and attend or engage in required adoptive parent training. We encourage you to attend the waiting parent support meetings we offer bimonthly. These meetings cover a variety of topics, many of which are requested by waiting parents. These meetings offer a way to stay connected with our staff, learn about various parenting or adoption specific topics and hear about recent trends and experiences in our domestic program.

When you have completed the required training and documentation for a home study, you will be assigned a social worker who will meet with you to explore questions or concerns you have, learn more about your hopes in adoption and discuss topics to help prepare you for parenting in general and through adoption. Following these meetings the official home study report is prepared that permits a parent(s) to receive a child into their home. In most cases, this same social worker will work with you during the post placement time when we continue to provide support and visits, generally for six months following placement. Once the home study is approved, you will be supported by our Domestic Adoption Program Support Specialist all the way to finalization.

After finalization, we encourage families to stay in contact with Barker and to participate in our many Post Adoption workshops or social activities or to offer support to incoming adoptive parents who may seek guidance. Our Department of Family and Post Adoption Services has robust offerings to support individuals and families over time. You may contact the department for information on fees for services.

Another support we offer is guidance around considering which placement agencies may be appropriate for your specific family situation and timing, assistance with developing a family profile or scrapbook, and providing guidance when preparing for an initial match telephone call or meeting with a birth parent. Another support we can offer is identifying a Barker parent/mentor who may be able to answer some of your questions – parent to parent.

In-Area Plan

Those prospective adoptive parents who join our In-area program will join a pool of waiting parents who will be presented to local expectant parents working with Barker. Barker Pregnancy Counselors work with expectant birth parents from any point in their pregnancy, or may meet a birth parent at the hospital upon delivery to make an adoption plan for their child. Our counselors work closely with birth parents to identify circumstances of their pregnancy and to identify their core priorities in selecting an adoptive family.

At some point during the counseling, the counselor will present scrapbooks of families to the client and share information about the family as the client(s) consider and choose an adoptive family. Often birth parents want to meet adoptive families either before delivery or soon after. Because local birth parents are provided a period of time to reconsider their decision to make an adoption plan (known as the revocation period) many birth parents will wait until after this revocation period is over before meeting the adoptive parents. Frequently, adoptive parents may be invited to join birth parents in the hospital upon delivery or shortly after.

Following delivery, babies are placed in care with Barker Cradle Care families for the duration of the revocation period (30 days in Maryland, 10 days in Virginia, 14 days in Washington, D.C.). Cradle Care provides an important period where qualified and loving families care for the newborn during the period when birth parents are able to resolve some of their grief and confirm their decision.

Following placement, adoptive families begin the six month Post Placement Supervision and Support period as required in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia, or longer if required by another state or agency. Beyond fulfilling a requirement, this period provides a helpful time to continue receiving support and information from your social worker about various resources or needs that most new parents face.

At the end of post placement period, adoptive parents can begin the process of finalization. Barker can refer parents to one of several local attorneys who specialize in adoption to represent them in their finalization.

Working with a Placement Agency or Adoption Attorney in another part of the country

Many families adopt their child by working with an agency or attorney from another part of the country. A main reason for this shift is that in many parts of the country there are more birth parents seeking to place a child and fewer adoptive families seeking to adopt in other areas of the country, and because some local birth parents choose to place with families they learn about via internet from another state.

There are many things that contribute to a family deciding to pursue or expand their adoption efforts to another part of the country. Such things as family composition, age of adoptive parents, race of adoptive parents, ability to travel, faith orientation, extended family that live in another state, or state laws regarding adoption, among others, are all factors in making this decision.

The main process difference is that these families will identify another agency or attorney who works with birth parents in a part of the country where the differences fit with the needs and resources of the adoptive family. This agency or attorney then becomes the family's **Placement Agency**. When a match occurs with a birth parent the family will often travel to visit and meet the prospective birthparent. When the baby is born, the adoptive family travels to take custody and await permission to return home with the baby.

Once a family has decided that working with an out of area agency or attorney **for placement** is the best path, a Support Specialist will help identify agencies or attorneys we are familiar with to refer to them. Families can also identify an agency or attorney themselves.

As with all Barker families, those choosing the Out-of-Area Program will participate in an information meeting, a clinical intake(s), all required trainings, and receive the support from a designated Support Specialist from application to finalization. They will also receive support from our Specialist when presented with a potential match or preparing for their first meeting with prospective birth parents. And, as with all Barker families, they will have a designated social worker during the home study period and the Post Placement Supervision period.

Once the child is born Barker will coordinate with your placement agency to obtain approval from the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) offices of birth mother's residence and your state of residence that will permit you to bring your baby home. As your **Receiving Agency**, Barker and your Social Worker will provide Post Placement and ongoing support until finalization.

At the end the post placement period, adoptive parents can begin the process of finalization. Barker can refer parents to several licensed adoption qualified attorneys in the area to represent them in their finalization.

Working directly with birth parents with support of an attorney

Increasingly prospective adoptive parents feel comfortable engaging in direct outreach with potential birth parents. Outreach may include informing extended family members, friends in other areas of the country, home town physicians, and more recently online portals that are geared specifically to introducing birth parents to adoptive parents. Other adoptive parents feel comfortable engaging a local adoption attorney to represent them and utilize the attorney's outreach efforts with birth parents.

Parents who pursue this path in adoption generally feel more comfortable engaging with people and talking about their adoption plans. They speak directly to birth parents as they get to know one another and decide if a match is mutually beneficial. In all cases, the adoptive family will engage an attorney to represent them and to guide them through the specific state regulations involved in this kind of private adoption.

As with all Barker families, those choosing to work independently will participate in an information meeting, a clinical intake(s), all required trainings, and receive the support from a designated Support Specialist from application to finalization. They may also seek support from a Specialist when presented with a potential match or preparing for their first meeting with prospective birth parents. And, as with all Barker families, they will have a designated social worker during the home study period and the Post Placement Supervision period.

The main process difference is that these families will work independently to engage with potential birth parents and will engage an attorney earlier in the process to represent them. When a match occurs with a birthparent often the family will travel to visit and meet the prospective birthparent. When the baby is born, the adoptive family travels to take custody and await permission from ICPC to take the baby home.

Once the child is born your Support Specialist at Barker will work with you to obtain ICPC approval to bring the baby home. As your **Receiving Agency**, Barker and your Social Worker will provide Post Placement Support and ongoing support until finalization.