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Open adoption record laws in all closed-record states

Triona Guidry - Cary, Ill.

I read with interest USA TODAY's article "As adoptees seek roots, states unsealing records." As an adult adoptee, I hope this article will show the deplorable second-class status to which adoptees are reduced (Cover story, News, Feb. 13).

The problem is worse than USA TODAY's article indicated. While some states have opened adoptees' records without condition, compromise solutions such as registries are inaccessible, ineffective and largely unaccountable.

Some states have a "sandwich situation" in which adoptees have complete access to these registries or none at all, based on when they were born.

Then there are interstate and international adoption cases, which further complicate matters. Many cases fall through the cracks because there are few procedures in place to make state-based adoption services cooperate to release pertinent information to adoptees.

Some state-based adoption services are poorly advertised and lack adequately trained staff. Sadly, many people don't know post-adoption programs exist, so match rates can be low.

As a participant in the Illinois intermediary program, my identifying information was disclosed to a relative without my consent.

Although I have been promised written notification of this information release, six months later I have yet to receive it.

There are few mechanisms for holding these programs accountable for services that, under current law, only they can provide. The only equitable choice is to grant adoptees unconditional access to their records in every state.

Posted at 12:09 AM/ET, February 21, 2008 in Family - Letters, Letter to the editor | Permalink

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Mickey Rat wrote: 5h 20m ago

This shouldn't be that hard to solve where records are kept of natural parents and the new names of the adopted-out children.

Example: Mary gave up a child 19 years ago, and would dearly love to see her child. Mary can notify the adoption agency or some state clearing house that she would like to hear from the child if the child starts looking for her. She gives the details needed to ensure a match if the kid comes around looking for her. Mary is willing to give a DNA sample to avoid erroneous matches.

Joe grows up knowing he was adopted and wonders about his mother. He learns that AgencyX handled his adoption. He contacts them (or that state clearinghouse) and says "this is my name, this is when I was adopted, and I am willing to give a DNA sample if asked".

The agency matches up the records, and sees that both parent and child are looking for each other and they arrange DNA tests and get release agreements.

If a mother doesn't want to be contacted, that can be hard on a child who wants to meet her. But if she has no cover to protect herself when choosing adoption over abortion, well, she may choose abortion. At least with this idea, parents and children who want to find each other can get it done.

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