



CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA  
Founded in 1920

## **CWLA Standards of Excellence in Adoption**

[http://www.cwla.org/programs/adoption/open\\_records4.htm](http://www.cwla.org/programs/adoption/open_records4.htm)

- The agency providing adoption services should support efforts to ensure that adults who were adopted have direct access to identifying information about themselves and their birth parents.
- The prevailing legal practice in the United States prohibits adults who were adopted as children from obtaining access to their original birth certificates or to identifying information contained in their adoption records.
- The practice of sealing records has come under scrutiny as the benefits of openness in adoption for the adopted individual, birth parents, and adoptive parents have come to be understood. The interests of adopted adults in having information about their origins have come to be recognized as having critical psychological importance as well as importance in understanding their health and genetic status. Because such information is essential to adopted adults' identity and health needs, the agency should promote policies that provide adopted adults with direct access to identifying information.
- This trend toward openness has already been recognized by the Indian Child Welfare Act (P.L. 95-608). Under that Act, courts must unseal records for American Indian children, on request, and provide information necessary for the adopted individual to ascertain his or her tribal affiliation and membership. Such information may include the names of the adopted child's birth parents.

*Child Welfare League of America Standards of Excellence for Adoption Services, 2000. Section 6.22, p. 87.*

## **NACAC Policy Statements:**

[http://www.nacac.org/about\\_policystatements.html](http://www.nacac.org/about_policystatements.html)

### **Access to Original Birth Certificates**

NACAC supports access to original birth certificates to any adult adoptee at age of majority. (December 5, 1986)

### **Access to Original Birth Certificates**

Recognizing that many adult adoptees have a need for more complete information about their birth families, NACAC supports their right to this information and supports access to original birth certificates to any adult adoptee at age of majority. (April 11, 1992)

### **Full Disclosure of Background Information**

We believe that foster and adoptive families have a right to full disclosure of background information from agency, court, school, mental health and medical files. Such information is critical to the success of placements. (December 7, 1991)



**Social Work Speaks, Volume 5, p. 131**

"The need and right of adoptees to know their birth origin should be recognized and respected. This right extends to requests by adult adoptees for identifying information. If a reunion is requested by a birth relative, the service providers should attempt to provide counseling and intermediary services, being fully cognizant of the sensitivities of all parties involved. Both adoptive parents and birth parents should be informed of the limits of confidentiality."

*Policy Statement approved by the NASW Delegate Committee, November 1987, and reconfirmed by the Delegate Committee, August 1993. Social Work Speaks*



**National Adoption Center**



*There are no unwanted children, just unfound families.*

## **OPEN RECORDS POLICY STATEMENT**

<http://www.adopt.org/whoweare/policy.html#Open%20Records>

The National Adoption Center believes it is an inalienable right of all citizens, including adopted adults, to have unencumbered access to their original birth certificates. In keeping with this position, we believe that copies of both the original and the amended birth certificate should be given to the adoptive family at the time of finalization unless specifically denied by the birth parents. In any case, the National Adoption Center advocates that the adoptee, at age 18, be granted access to his/her original birth certificate.

The National Adoption Center also supports an adult adoptee's unencumbered access to all medical and historical records.\* These records should be given to adopting families prior to finalization.

\*Historical records refer to that information acquired about the child before coming into his/her final adoption placement. Such information includes, but is not limited to, foster care placements, childhood photos, information about siblings, number of moves before adoption, reason for entering foster care, details of school history and related school documents and any early history of development which may include pertinent medical records.

Approved by the Board of Directors - June 15, 2000