

Search Investigator Ethics

1. Do no harm to adoptee or first family members.

- Adoptee should be kept abreast of all new information in a timely manner.
- Initial contact should be made only with adoptee knowledge and consent first.
- First mothers/fathers/family members should be encouraged to share with immediate family if and or when they are ready at their own pace.
- Contact between the adoptee and first family is not established until the biological relationship is confirmed by confidential identifying information or DNA testing.

2. Confidentiality.

- Search information is confidential between the adoptee and investigator.
- Social media posts should only happen with the written and verbal consent of the adoptee and or first family members.
- Likewise, adoptee and or first family member testimonials should only be posted on social media, websites, or other marketing materials with written consent by adoptee and or first family members.
- If the investigator works with a translator, they are held to the same standards of confidentiality and other aspects of the guidelines as the investigator.

3. Adoptee and first family consent.

- We recommend adoptees ask for a consultation to determine if the prospective investigator would be a good fit for you.
- Pace of search should be driven by adoptee and not of the investigator.
- Written and or verbal consent to move forward with search-related activities should be given at each step from both the adoptee and first family as applicable.
- Adoptee should not be pressured into doing an aspect of a search they are not ready for or in agreement with.
- Adoptees may discontinue their search at any point in the process and be refunded a pro-rated amount.
- All pictures, videos of reunion activities require adoptee and first family consent before, during, and after the search on any social media platform.

4. Transparent fees and service delivery.

- We recommend adoptees ask for and receive a written contract with specifics of fees and service delivery/implementation with signatures by both parties (adoptee and investigator).
- We recommend that adoptees ask for information describing what methods the investigators will employ to find first families.
- We strongly discourage adoptees giving direct money for travel. Rather, we recommend that travel expenses be reimbursed post expense with proof of expenses.
- Adoptees should ask for receipts with time stamps.
- If the investigator shares pictures of locations confirm that they are complete pictures from various angles with addresses shown and or request a video with confirmatory evidence of local/region.

5. Trauma and adoption informed approach with adoptees and first families.

- Ideally the investigator would have some knowledge of the potential risks, benefits, and and emotionality of a search for the adoptee and the first family and offer this information at the onset of a search.
- While anecdotal evidence suggests that many adoptees and first families are not interested in support after the reunion it is helpful to offer resources should they need or desire support later.

6. Pre and post reunion supportive counseling and psychoeducation.

- We strongly recommend investigators inform adoptees and first families to seek support, both informally and formally, before and after search to help process what is found.
- To that end, investigators should have some knowledge of and referral to ongoing mental health support and resources.