

# Los Angeles County DCFS Adoptions Division Post Adoption Services (PAS) Newsletter

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The Post Adoption Services (PAS) Unit is committed to providing support and resources to adoptive parents, adoptees and birth families as they face the lifelong issues of adoption. Please contact the PAS Intake Line at (800) 735-4984 for any assistance we can provide.

## ***National Adoption Month***

National Adoption Week was first proclaimed in Massachusetts in 1976. The number of states that designated a special week to recognize the practice of adoption gradually increased, leading to National Adoption Month in 1990. The purpose of National Adoption Month is to focus attention on the increasing number of children in the child welfare system waiting to be adopted. Each year, the president joins the adoption community across the country in proclaiming November as a month when Americans should be aware of adoption as a way to build a family.

On Saturday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, at Edelman Children's Court, Los Angeles will host the 7<sup>th</sup> annual "National Adoption Day," a collective national effort to raise awareness of the thousands of children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families, and to celebrate all families who adopt. In Los Angeles, more than 200 children will have their adoptions finalized. The governor and mayor have been invited as well as celebrities to help celebrate the event. On National Adoption Day last year, 3,300 adoptions across the nation were finalized.

## ***An Adoption Story...***

*(from [www.nationaladoptionday.org](http://www.nationaladoptionday.org))*

On National Adoption Day in 2002, Jim & Janet Medlen from Pennsylvania adopted two African-

American brothers: Darnell, age 14, and Antonio, age 11, making the Medlen's a family with six adopted boys. Darnell and Antonio lived with the Medlen family for two years as foster children before being adopted. In foster care for most of their lives, the boys had been in several different homes and had been featured on the local "Wednesday's Child" television segment. After National Adoption Day 2002, the boys were secured with a permanent family of their own.

In prior years, the Medlen's adopted boys who were 15 and 16 years old. Janet and Jim decided to become foster parents about ten years ago. They say they decided to adopt their foster children, who were considered "hard-to-place," because they realized that the children needed a family of their own to succeed in life, rather than being bounced from foster home to foster home. The Medlen's were willing to give the boys the extra consideration, help and attention they needed, and believed that because of their love and support for the boys, they'd be more apt to discover their talents.

### ***You're never too old to be adopted...***

Here are some things that teenagers have said about being adopted:

*"I have a mother and a father who love me. I have a family. And no matter what, when I grow up and move out into my own house, I will always have a mother to come back to. When I have kids, they will actually have a grandmother." - Q.M., adopted at 14*

*"I probably would have been a hoodlum or causing a lot of trouble if I didn't come to this choice in my life to be adopted." - A.H., adopted at 12*

## ***Adoptee Searches***

Despite having wonderful adoptive families, many children who were adopted grow up and desire to search for their birth families. One adoptee (an individual who has been adopted) describes the desire to search using an analogy:

“Adoption is like walking into a movie theater and the movie has already started. You enjoy the movie very much and applaud at the end. But you still want to see the beginning.” (AAC website)

Here are some stats about searching:

- ❖ 60-90% of adoptees want to obtain identifying information about their biological parents - this is a normative aspect of being adopted (AAC, 1996)
- ❖ Among adolescents who were adopted, 72% wanted to know why they were adopted, 65% wanted to meet their birthparents, and 94% wanted to know which birthparent they looked like (AAC, 1996)
- ❖ in one research study, every birthparent who was surveyed wanted to be found by the child they had placed for adoption, 95% of the adoptees surveyed wanted to be found by their birthparents, and 98% of the adoptive parents surveyed supported reunions between their adopted child and the child's birth family (CWLA, 1998)

Most adoption support groups encourage adoptees to include their adoptive family in their search. Sometimes the adoptee does not realize that their parents possess information about the birth family. Many adoptive parents want to emotionally support their adult child as they navigate through the search process.

Here's some advice to adoptive families during an adoptee's search, which will help guarantee that your family unit is not damaged: Support the adoptee in doing their search, help them understand that it is perfectly normal to want to know about every aspect of their background, and acknowledge that they are not looking for parental replacements but for the very beginning of their story.

## ***Adoptive parent support groups***

PAS social workers facilitate monthly drop-in support groups (English and Spanish) for adoptive parents throughout L.A. County. Please call the PAS Intake Line for information such as dates, times and locations of the groups.

## ***A reunion story...***

One of our PAS workers helped to facilitate a reunion between a birthmother and the baby girl she made a plan of adoption for thirty-some years earlier. The baby girl - now an adult woman - shared with the PAS worker an email she sent to her birthmother. Here's an excerpt:

*“I've thought about you all these years, have always believed that you loved me, and can hardly believe this day has arrived.*

*To give you peace of mind, I'm happy and healthy. And blessed with a close family and friends.*

*I was adopted by a loving couple - considerably older parents - and am an only child. Been engaged, but never married. And share my house with two spoiled dogs.*

*I'm eager to hear about your life - about relatives (do you have sisters or brothers, ever marry?), your dreams, and my heritage.*

*I have much to share with you, too. And look forward to bringing you into my life.*

*Love,  
[adoptee's name]”*

The PAS unit can assist those touched by adoption (adoptees, adoptive families, birth parents, biological siblings) during searches and reunions. In order to do this, we need written consents from interested parties. To submit consents and see how else we can help, please call our PAS Intake Line.

## ***AAP termination***

Pretty much all children who are adopted from the foster care system in Los Angeles County are eligible for Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) benefits. AAP benefits include a monthly subsidy and Medi-Cal coverage. AAP benefits - both the subsidy and Medi-Cal - terminate upon the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, regardless of whether or not the child is still in high school. If the child has a qualifying disability, and the parents request an extension prior to the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, it is possible that AAP benefits can be extended until the child's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

**PAS Intake Line:  
1-800-735-4984**