



Fact Sheet N° 22

Adoption

THE EVALUATION OF THE ELIGIBILITY AND THE SUITABILITY OF PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS

To adopt a child is not a right for adults. Adoption is, on the contrary, a protective measure for the child. A family that wishes to adopt, should be recognized beforehand as able to protect and respect in a lasting manner a child who was not born into that family, who already has his own life story distinct from the adoptive family, and who has suffered through situations that have traumatized him (a newborn child who has been abandoned or whose mother died has already suffered a trauma) or embodies differences from the society in which he is supposed to integrate. A family that wishes to adopt, should be recognized beforehand as able to protect and respect in a lasting manner a child in need of adoption. It is important to make a psycho-medico social study of the applicants to become adopters bearing in mind the interests of the child (although as yet unidentified) as a matter of priority.

The evaluation of prospective adoptive parents

A psycho-medico-social report of this family should be carried out before the process of adoption is initiated in order to verify of the family's competence to receive a child in the framework of adoption, to equate the needs of the child with the capacities of the family on a permanent, lasting and satisfactory basis and to approve the family officially by means of a certificate of suitability.

The evaluation of prospective adoptive parents is complex and as such requires a process of various interviews during which one acquires ever more profound and sincere knowledge of their motivations and living conditions. One has to be, to make it possible, in charge of a multidisciplinary team of professionals. Not all the interviews have to take place in the working environment of the professionals; it is indispensable to arrange visits to the home of the applicants and hold some of the interviews there, which normally will be more relaxed than in the professional environment.

Matching

In fact, the evaluation of the adoptive capacity of prospective adopters is one of the bases for making a good matching, a proposal for a cluster of child / parents, likely to end up by determining a bonding commitment and a filiation that is gratifying for both parties, and consequently a satisfactory adoption.

Other than in very exceptional and justified cases (for example long periods of cohabitation with the child, on condition that it wasn't initiated just to achieve adoption by fraudulent means), the evaluation of the adoptive capacity of prospective adoptive parents should be done *before* matching is considered. It does not happen because the family has identified a child that it wants to adopt.

In the case of relative adoption, the suitability of the one who adopts should be similarly assessed and certified.

Indicators

The important part of evaluation material on the adoptive capacity resides as a matter of priority in the following indicators:

- Physical, mental health and emotional stability of the applicants; their integration in the society around them.
- Their capacity to evolve with the passage of time (in their earlier life, throughout the successive conversations during the evaluation proceedings), to listen to what they are told.
- Their awareness of the difficulties that can be encountered in the various stages of their life with the adopted child and their ability to face up to the problems that can involve the child's possible differences from the new family and social environment.
- Their respect for the child's past experiences, his history, his secrets, his differences; their attitude towards the child's family of origin.
- Their availability in terms of the future child.
- Their flexibility, their capacity to absorb frustrations, their ability to accept that things will never really be exactly as they wish and that no child will ever respond entirely to their expectations, nor solve their problems or disappointments.

Criteria

The elements that should be studied carefully for suitability and which can justify a rejection in case of problems are the following:

- Their level of studies, socio-professional situation, social and ethnic-cultural identity of each one.
- Their physical and mental health and the emotional balance of each one.
- The personality of each one, his personal and family history; how he spent his childhood, the relationship with each of his parents, the separations, conflicts, what his current relationships with his parents are; how he begins a relationship with others.
- The history and relationship of the couple: how each one deals with conflicts; if they have had disruptions, failures, how have they overcome them; how do they behave with each other: each one respects the opinions of the other; they let each other express themselves...
- The composition of the family of each of the couple (understanding other people who live possibly under the same roof); the social and

family atmosphere in which they live and their integration in this environment; the attitude of the neighbourhood before the arrival of an adopted child and the stance they take themselves in the face of this.

- The civil, legal and judicial situation.

- The wish for a biological child:

- Does each of them have it and since when? (It is not unusual for some husbands not to want a child, but they adopt to satisfy their wife: How do they handle this within the couple?)

- Do they suffer from infertility/sterilisation? How have they overcome it? How has each of them reacted (rejection, depression, aggressiveness,)?

- If a pregnancy is possible in the future, how will it affect each of the children?

- Other motivation for adoption (for example: passing on their inheritance). What are the expectations of each of them in relation to the adopted child? How do they imagine him? How do they imagine the child's family of origin, the reasons for his abandonment? What is their outward attitude to that family? What degree of confidence do they have in the face of difficulties they might encounter in the education of their child? What is their attitude with regard to revealing the adoption, to the future questions the child may ask about his history, his origins?

There is always an element of personal interest, of selfishness in any relationship plan, whether it's natural or adoptive. But if this personal interest is omnipresent and contradicts the interests of the child it constitutes a contraindication of adoption. It is necessary to carefully check the truthfulness of the adopter applicants' statements since they have a tendency to give themselves the most perfect image possible which does not always correspond to reality.

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We are interested in your opinion! To tell us your experiences, ask us your questions about the themes addressed in this file, or to send us your suggestions for changes, don't hesitate to write to us at irc-cir@iss-ssi.org. We also invite you to share this file with other interested persons in your country. Thanks in advance!

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