

## WHAT IS ADOPTION?

### Information For Parents Considering Adoption



# Family Spirit

**Family Spirit  
Adoption Services  
New South Wales**

# Table of Contents

**Table of Contents ..... 2**

**Who Are We? ..... 3**

**What Service Can You Expect From Us? ..... 5**

**How Will We Work With You?..... 6**

**What Happens at the Time of the Birth?..... 7**

**How Long Is The Process of Decision Making? ..... 8**

**What Can I Expect From The Meetings With My Caseworker? ..... 9**

**What is Adoption? ..... 11**

    How does this happen? .....11

    What are some of the legal steps I will have to go through before I sign consent? .....12

**What is Openness in Adoption? ..... 13**

**What Sort of People Are Adoptive Parents? ..... 14**

**If You Live in a Rural or Regional Area..... 15**

**Vision Statement ..... 16**



## Who Are We?

Family Spirit Adoption Services (**FSAS**) is an accredited adoption service provider. Our service gives adoption related support services to all parties of an adoption. This includes parents thinking about placing their child for adoption, prospective adoptive parents who are infertile and wanting to form a family through adoption, supporting families created through adoption and helping people separated as result of past adoption practice, to be reunited with family.

We are a NSW wide service and are based in Bankstown, Sydney.

FSAS is one of many programs within the Families and Community Division of the larger organisation of CatholicCare Sydney which is the welfare arm of the Catholic Church.

FSAS is government funded and provides services across the whole of the community; our service supports people from any background, culture or religion.

How we work with you is decided by the legal requirements of the Adoption Act 2000 and the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998.

FSAS is one of four adoption service providers in NSW. Parents considering adoption can contact any Agency to see which service best suits their needs.

### **Family Spirit Adoption Services**

Tel: (02) 8709 9333

Email: [Adoptions@familyspirit.org](mailto:Adoptions@familyspirit.org)

### **Anglicare Foster Care Program**

Tel: (02) 9890 6855

Email: [adoption@anglicare.org.au](mailto:adoption@anglicare.org.au)

### **Barnados Australia – Find-a-Family**

Tel: (02) 8596 5000

## **Family & Community Services—Adoption Services**

Tel: (02) 9716 3003

Email: [adoption.permanentcare@facs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:adoption.permanentcare@facs.nsw.gov.au)

## What Service Can You Expect From Us?

Whilst FSAS is an adoption service provider it does not have an adoption agenda. Our main goal in working with you is to empower and assist you, to make the most informed and best suited decision for your child's future care. This may be adoption or an alternative decision such as parenting or extended family caring for your child.

If you decide to contact us once you have read this brochure, ask to speak to the Adoption Duty Caseworker, who will attend to your inquiry and/or take your referral.

If you make a referral to FSAS a Caseworker will be allocated to follow up your referral. That person will then contact you to make a time to meet with you, for an information session. After this information session you may decide if you want to continue working with us. You can let your caseworker know.

Your confidentiality and need for privacy will be respected at all times. Feel free to let us know what the best way for us to contact you is.

## How Will We Work With You?

If you choose to refer to FSAS you will have a caseworker who will work with you on a one to one basis.

You will be required to engage in a process of regular meetings with your caseworker. Meetings are usually weekly or fortnightly. How often you will meet, will depend on how far along you are in your pregnancy or if your baby has already been born.

These sessions usually happen at our office in Bankstown. It may also be organised at your home or at a place closer to you, if this makes it easier for you to make your appointments.

### **Voluntary Short Term Foster Care while you consider your options:**

You have the option of choosing to place your child in voluntary short term foster care whilst you explore your decision about adoption. Your child will be placed with experienced Foster Carers who are well known to FSAS. You may choose to meet the carers and you will be able to see your child at a time that fits with you, the foster carer and the caseworker.

FSAS believes short term care offers you a chance to experience the reality of being separated from your child. You may see and spend time with your child whilst they are in care. FSAS believes that this is an important part of making an informed decision.

You are able to take your baby home at any time, if adoption is no longer an option you wish to explore for your child.

## What Happens at the Time of the Birth?

Your caseworker will link you in with a hospital close to where you live and help you contact the Obstetric Social Worker at that hospital. This person will support you with getting antenatal care you may need leading up to the birth of your baby. This Obstetric Social Worker will help you to prepare for and support you during your stay in hospital.

Some questions to explore with the Obstetric Social Worker and your caseworker at FSAS would be:

- Who do you want present at the birth?
- Do you want your baby to room in with you?
- Do you want to breast feed?
- The importance of naming your baby.

How much time you choose to spend with your baby and how involved you want to be in caring for your baby while in hospital, is entirely your decision.

You will have the same rights and expect the same level of care as any other parent in hospital. You may choose to take your baby home after the birth.

Once your baby is born, if you still want to keep considering your options then you would need to contact your caseworker at FSAS or you may find it easier to ask the Obstetric Social Worker to contact us on your behalf. We will not be in contact with you after the birth of your baby, unless you contact us. This is to ensure you feel no pressure to proceed with considering adoption.

## How Long Is The Process of Decision Making?

If you are considering adoption, the minimum period under the Adoption Act 2000 before you can give your consent to the adoption of your child is 30 days after their birth date.

Sometimes the process of decision making and planning may take up to 3 months or more, if you or your circumstances require it.

Our aim is to make sure you have plenty of time to consider your decision but at the same time, balance your needs for informed decision making with the need for your child to be in their permanent family (be that with you, your family or an adoptive family).



## What Can I Expect From The Meetings With My Caseworker?

You will be provided with a safe and confidential space for you to explore the complexities in your present circumstances.

You will be provided with Mandatory Legal Information for Parents. Your caseworker will work through this information with you, so you understand your rights as a parent and all the implications for you and your child of an adoption decision.

You will have the opportunity to explore all of the other options available to you, in providing for your child's future care. Your caseworker will link you in with other relevant services if required.

Some other options to consider are explained in the brochure - Exploring Adoption: Other Options

You will have the opportunity to explore the short term and long term emotional implications of an adoption decision for yourself.

You will have the opportunity to receive information and hear about the experiences of adopted children.

You will receive information and have the opportunity to explore the realities of openness in adoption. See Page 12

You will have the opportunity to consider the experiences of other birth parents that have made an adoption decision and the long term realities of living with that decision. See page 12

If you choose to proceed with the adoption of your child your caseworker will assist you in planning for it.

- They will ensure you have received and understood the mandatory legal information you need to know and take you through any additional legal steps required as per the Adoption Act 2000 and the Adoption Regulation 2015.
- They will work with you in preparing 'life story' information to be given to the adoptive parents.
- They will organise and support you through the legal processes leading up to when you can give your consent.
- They will organise for you to select the adoptive parents for your child.
- They will draw up an adoption plan which will state your requests for contact and any other important information in relation to the care of your child, such as in relation to your child's religion or culture.

## What is Adoption?

Adoption is a legal process by which the legal rights and responsibilities of being a parent are permanently transferred from the child's parents to the adoptive parents.

### How does this happen?

If you choose to pursue adoption you will be required to sign a Consent to Adoption. When you sign a consent you are transferring over your rights and responsibilities as your child's parent to the Secretary of Family and Community Services.

After you sign Consent you will have 30 days to change your mind. This is called the Revocation Period.

If you don't change your mind and revoke your Consent, FSAS will then proceed with plans to place your child for adoption as per your wishes.

6 to 9 months after your child is placed with their adoptive parents FSAS proceeds with applying for an Order of Adoption through the Supreme Court. If the Court grants an Order of Adoption, then this is when the adoption is finalised. With the making of the Order of Adoption, your child's guardianship becomes the responsibility of the adoptive parents. Your child will now be given an amended birth certificate naming the adoptive parents as their parents.

***(If you make a referral to FSAS you will receive more detailed Mandatory Legal Information for Parents, about your rights under the Adoption Act 2000, the legal processes of adoption and the impacts of adoption. Your caseworker will work closely with you during the process to help you clearly understand all this information so that you make an informed decision about adoption and you are aware at all times of your rights as a parent).***

## **What are some of the legal steps I will have to go through before I sign consent?**

### **All parents.**

Have to receive Registered Counselling – a session which ensures you understand your rights and have a sound understanding of the decision you are about to make.

### **If you are under 18 years.**

You will also need to seek independent legal advice before signing Consent.

### **If you are under 16 years.**

It would need to be reported by your Registered Counsellor that you have the capacity to understand the effect of signing an instrument of consent to the adoption.

### **If you are a parent of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage**

The Adoption Act does allow for the adoption of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. There are additional requirements that need to be fulfilled. The adoption law seeks to protect future generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from past practices that separated children from families, communities and culture.

### **If you are a parent with a mental illness.**

You may need to see a Psychiatrist or other appropriate health professional to ensure you are able to make an informed decision about adoption and give your informed consent to the adoption of your child.

*Your caseworker will organise with you the steps you are required to complete*

## What is Openness in Adoption?

Openness in adoption is about sharing ongoing contact with the adoptive family and your child, once your child has been placed for adoption.

The type and amount of contact is something that is negotiated between the birthparent/s and the adoptive parents. Contact can involve meetings, letters, emails, telephone contact, skype etc. Contact can be organised and managed by CAS. Contact usually starts off non identifying, to respect the privacy of both birth and adoptive families at the time of placement.

As trust builds and a relationship is formed between birth and adoptive families, some choose to exchange their identifying details and share direct contact instead of going through FSAS. You will decide when and if you are comfortable to do so.

Changes to the Adoption Act 2000 now allows adoptive parents and birth parents to apply for identifying information. Adoptive parents may choose to apply for original birth documents about their child and birth parents may choose to apply for their child's amended birth certificate once an order of adoption has been made. There are conditions surrounding the release of this information.

Openness in adoption is seen as being best for the child as it will allow your child to grow up knowing where they come from, who they are and why they have come to be in their family through adoption.

Openness will allow you to know how your child is doing and to feel reassured that you may continue to play a part in their life and share a relationship with them. For the adoptive parents, openness in adoption will help them to better meet the needs of the child as he or she makes sense of being adopted.

The type and level of contact is recorded in an Adoption Plan which the birthparent/s, adoptive parents and the Principal Officer will sign prior to the making of the Order of Adoption

## What Sort of People Are Adoptive Parents?

FSAS is committed to placing a child in a family that is able to best meet that child's needs. Couples applying to FSAS to create a family through adoption are unable to have their own biological children.

We have a 'Pool' of approved prospective adoptive parents from different social, educational, religious, lifestyle and cultural backgrounds. All our prospective adoptive parents live in NSW.

Couples go through a process of training and assessment to ensure they are suitable for adoptive parenting, before they can be approved.

To be approved, prospective adoptive parents need to show that they can accept an adopted child who comes with their own unique background, personality and story, which needs to be respected and nurtured, not forgotten or changed. They need to also show they are able to embrace openness in adoption and are committed to building a relationship with their child's birth family.

You have the choice of selecting the adoptive parents for your child; a parent usually does this after they have given Consent. A selection of non identifying profiles written by the couples, which also include photographs, will be given to you to read. FSAS encourages you to choose the adoptive parents for your child as we believe it is an important part of your informed decision making. It is also a way for you to begin the connection with your child's adoptive family.

You are able to first meet the adoptive parents of your child at the time your child is placed with their adoptive parents or a few weeks after, which ever is best for you. This is when and how contact starts.

## If You Live in a Rural or Regional Area

FSAS will accept referrals from parents in NSW rural and regional areas. You are entitled to the same service and level of support.

If you live out of Sydney your FSAS caseworker will organise a caseworker located closer to you (through e.g. Hospital, Local Health Services or local CatholicCare Service or a private Social Worker) that will take you through the process. You may still contact your FSAS caseworker at any time. Your caseworker at CAS in Sydney will work closely with your local caseworker, in supporting them to support you.

If you require voluntary temporary foster care for your child we will try our best to provide your child with a carer in your local area. Sometimes this will be impossible to do however, in which case we will need to organise a temporary foster care placement for your child in Sydney.

You may also choose to live in Sydney for the duration of, or part of, the pregnancy or after delivery and your FSAS caseworker will help to find you suitable accommodation. You may also consider staying with friends or family who may be half way between where you live and Sydney, whilst you explore your options. In this way a FSAS worker may be able to meet you half way and work with you directly.

If you are in a rural/regional area and are considering adoption for your child, it is helpful if you refer early so that we are able to better meet your needs. You can telephone reverse charges if that is helpful.

# Family Spirit Adoption Services

## Vision Statement

Our vision at Family Spirit Adoption Services is to provide clients with a professional and ethical service in the context of collaborative relationships. Our relationships with our clients are characterised by compassion, as well as respect for the dignity and autonomy of the individual.

We strive to facilitate our clients' informed decision-making by focusing on clients' strengths and capabilities and by sharing specialist knowledge about the impact of adoption. This knowledge is founded on the accumulated wisdom of the evolving field of adoption practice.

We believe a child has the right to a permanent, safe and nurturing family that honours the child's birth and adoptive heritage throughout the child's life. This belief is evidenced in our preparations and expectations of prospective adoptive parents and informs the direction of our post adoption support.

The principles that underpin the Family Spirit Adoption Services vision are reflected in our work place relationships by valuing collaboration, respect, dignity, autonomy and individual areas of strength within the team.





# Family Spirit

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*Or visit the Family Spirit website  
for more information about our services.*

**[www.familyspirit.org](http://www.familyspirit.org)**

