Adoptions From The Heart®

Designing Your Profile: Combine Words & Pictures to Create a Loving Portrait of *Your* Family

Make your first impression count!

Adoptions From the Heart has partnered with ParentFinder to assist our families in the profile process. Adoptive families have the option to design their own profile or to utilize ParentFinder. ParentFinder offers design assistance as well as the option to put all your information online for additional exposure.

Families should use the below rules and guidelines

All profiles must meet the following parameters:

- Up to five (5) double-sided pages (or ten (10) single-sided pages)
- Each page must be in a three-hole punch plastic sleeve --each plastic sleeve should then be stapled together along the left (like a booklet)
- No larger than 8.5 x 11 (but CAN be smaller)
- Make twelve (12) sets/copies for AFTH

Profiles should NOT:

- Be bound in any matter (spiral, photo book, tied with ribbons/bows, etc.) except for staples along the sides of the plastic sleeves
- Include your last name (regardless of your level of openness)
- Use the phrase “Dear Birth Mother” or “Dear Birth Parents”
- Compare your adoption to the adoption of pets.
- Ignore your decision to adopt transracially

Profiles received that do not meet the above requirements will not be accepted.

Organizing the Profile

Begin with an outline

- An outline will help organize the flow and focus the profile on the main points
- Divide the profile into sections
    - Choose a few main ideas upon which to focus. Leave the lengthy family histories and parenting philosophies for later contacts.
    - Titles create a road map for the reader and make the text more pleasing to the eyes.
    - Samples of sections: introduction, individual PAP pages (including careers and hobbies), family, home and community, pets (NOT a full page!), your journey to adoption, diversity and community, transracial adoption, travel, what you do for fun, promises, closing page
- Use the space
    - Profiles can be anywhere from 1 to 10 pages – use this space to your advantage!
    - Avoid large empty spaces – use photos or blurbs; if you find yourself drawing blanks on how to fill space, consider decreasing the number of pages in your profile

Photos

- Use a large, clear, close-up photo of <u>your current family</u> on your front page and your back page. Photos with nieces and nephews or extended family should be saved for the inside of your profile. All members of the household must be on the front cover.
- Put your best photos forward: choose in-focus, clear, and not distorted. Choose close-up photos compared to scenic or large group photos and avoid red-eyes.
- Avoid making photos too small – a few large, clear photos are better than many small, hard-to-see photos.
- If you're adopting transracially, an expecting mother often likes to see how you plan on incorporating cultural differences in your everyday life. Show the diversity in your family, neighborhood, school or church.
- Many expectant parents will look at your photos before deciding whether to read your profile, so let your photos do some of the talking! Use action shots to tell expectant parents about your interests and personality.
- Refrain from using too many selfies or close-ups. While it's important to have a few too many will limit the ability to tell a story and truly get to know you. Refer back to action shots.
- Put captions on your photos to help tell your story as well.
- Include photos of extended family (your siblings and parents and others you are close to), but don't overdo it. Complicated family trees can be confusing and distract expectant parents from the focus – You! Along the same lines, try to use photos of you with your family members in the profile so expectant parents recognize someone in each photo, and use the captions to explain who everyone is.
- Include photos of your home and neighborhood. Expecting parents like to see where their child will grow up in addition to with whom.

Language

- Remember your audience – you are gearing this towards expectant parents, not the baby. With this in mind, you should cut out the cutesy "waiting for you" stuff.
- Avoid phrases like "even if you don't choose us…". This is a given, and could feel like it is pressuring the expectant parents to choose you.
- While you should talk about your journey to adoption, you do not want to include a long narrative about your history of infertility. If infertility is part of your journey, keep that part of your profile short and positive – something like, "After getting married, we struggled with infertility. While it was difficult, it helped us to realize how much we wanted to be parents. We learned about open adoption and we are so excited to grow our family this way".
- Avoid numbers such as we been married for 10 years, or we are 42 years old, for example. Instead consider we married in 2010. We are in our early forties, or we were born in 1980. This will eliminate inaccuracies that may require updates in the future.
- If you have children at home, it is important to include them in your profile without them being the sole focus of it. You want the expecting mother to see how there is space in your family for a new baby. If your child is old enough, having them write a little about themselves and anything about their new baby brother or sister can be a nice touch.
- Be careful with your language in the profile, keeping in mind that this is the expectant mother's baby, not your baby. You should avoid language like "our baby" and instead use "the baby" or "a baby".
- If you are open to adopting a child of a different race, you should talk about it in your profile. Include information about the diversity in your community and friend group.
- Talk about openness! Preferably on the first and/or last page of your profile, include a few sentences about the level of openness you are looking for. Keep in mind that your profile will only be shown to expectant parents whose preferences match yours, so you can keep things vague in your profile without committing to more openness than you are comfortable with. You can say something like:

- "We would love to send pictures and letters to you throughout this child's life, and are looking forward to sharing visits with you in the future if that is something you are interested in".
- You also want to be thoughtful about your language here, speaking positively and using phrases like "would like to", "would love to", "are looking forward to" rather than negative or forced language like "open to" or "willing to".

Window Into Your World

Be Concise

- The profile is your first impression – use words, phrases and photos that will capture the best descriptions of yourselves and your home.
- Avoid long, super descriptive paragraphs. Bullet points are your friend!
- If you want to include paragraphs, use **bolding** or <u>underlining</u> to pull out certain words or phrases to draw the eye along the page.
- You may also want to use text boxes or lists to break up the text a bit on some pages.
- As mentioned above, you can also use captions on your photos to tell some of your story.

Be Honest

- Truth is an essential component of adoption. Don't try to hide information from expectant parents, and don't try to be someone else just to impress. It's vital to be truthful. Everyone has flaws, and while you don't need to highlight flaws, you should recognize that you are not perfect. When families present themselves as perfect, it translates to expecting/birth parents as a red flag or dishonesty.
- Explain your desire to adopt and why. Expectant parents are looking to see what an individual or couple would offer a new son or daughter if chosen to parent their child.
- Show personality! Don't be afraid to include silly photos and use humor. Profiles should help expectant parents connect with prospective adoptive parents.
- Be unique – some paid services ask potential parents to complete fill-in-the-blank questionnaires, which can product "cookie-cutter" type profiles that look and sound similar to other parents' profiles.
- Let your personality shine through. Think about what it is that makes you who you are and include those things.

Perspective

Edit, Edit, Edit!

- Take your time! Ask friends and family members to review your profile for content, grammar and punctuation. Listen to advice and suggestions!
- Always have your social worker take a look at your profile, before printing out your twelve copies! The counselors at your AFTH office can offer some great feedback as well. Remember, these are also the people who show profiles to expectant parents, so they often have insights into what expectant parents are looking for in profiles, as well as what works and what doesn't work.
- Most importantly, step back and view the words and photos from the eyes of an expectant parent. Show compassion and empathy, and always thank the reader for taking the time to read the profile.

The adoption process is an exercise in patience and perseverance. The adoptive parent profile is no exception. Investing ample time and insight during this crucial step on the adoption journey will help create a profile that pops off the page, as well as make a treasured keepsake of a child's adoption story.

Remember, we're here to answer any questions you may have about creating your profile.