National Down Syndrome Adoption Network
planning for a loving future

“Adopting a Child with Down Syndrome”
Stephanie Thompson, Director, NDSAN
National Down Syndrome Adoption Network (NDSAN)

*Founded in 1981 by Robin and David Steele
*The NDSAN is a program of the Down Syndrome Association of Greater Cincinnati
*Although a program of the DSAGC, we serve, work for, and represent children and families in all 50 states
The Mission of the National Down Syndrome Adoption Network:

To ensure that every child with Down syndrome has the opportunity to grow up in a loving family.
Services We Provide:
Birth Parent Line
NDSAN Registry
Support to Adoptive Families
Outreach to all
Information for Anyone!
Tiffany is 12 years old and is currently in the state of Washington with her sister Kimberly who is 14. They can go to any state. There are no fees to adopt these sisters, and a subsidy will travel with them. www.ndsan.org
When a Birth Parent Makes an Adoption Plan

- Referrals from Genetic Counselors, hospital Social Workers, Pregnancy counselors
- “Yes, there are many families waiting to adopt a child WITH Down syndrome”
  - Making an adoption plan is a LOVING CHOICE
- The NDSAN received 128 calls from birth families in 2015
Cheyenne is 14 years old and is currently in Tennessee. She has Down syndrome and can go to any state. There are no fees to adopt Cheyenne and a subsidy will travel with her. www.ndsan.org
Robin and David have 10 adopted children, 4 of whom have Down syndrome, and Robin has provided adoption support to families for over 35 years.

Stephanie Thompson, Director

Stephanie has a 24 year old birth son with DS and was the Early Matters Coordinator for the DSAGC, providing support and resources to new parents.
Logan is 14 years old and is currently in Michigan. He has Mosaic Down syndrome. He can go to any state. There are no fees to adopt Logan and a subsidy will travel with him. www.ndsan.org
Just a Few of the Resources Offered to Birth Families

Referral to their local parent group

24/7 Support

- DSG
- Lettercase.org
- ndsan.org
- ndss.org
- Dsdiagnosisnetwork.org
- NDSS
- Lettercase.org
Beau is almost 11 years old and is currently in Florida. He has Down syndrome and he can go to any state. There are no fees to adopt Beau and a subsidy will travel with him. www.ndsan.org
Read about this beautiful adoption story here:
http://www.jennymo.com/2013_07_01_archive.html
Adopting a Child with Down Syndrome

In order to adopt, you need to have a home study!

A home study is a very large, detailed and in-depth assessment of your family.

Information needed to complete a home study:
* Extensive childhood history
* Information on your marriage
* Extensive information on your children and other individuals living in your home
* Your health / medical records check
* Your employment
* Your financial situation
* Reasons for wanting to adopt
Raymear is 17 years old and is currently in New Jersey. He has Down syndrome and can go to any state. There are no fees to adopt Raymear and a subsidy will travel with him. www.ndsan.org
Who Can Write Your Home Study – Which Goes Hand in Hand with…
Who Should I Choose for the Adoption Process?

Option 1: Private Adoption Agency
You will want to choose a nonprofit (501c3) agency for special needs adoptions, which I will explain later
• Most private adoption agencies are all-inclusive, meaning they will provide all adoption services you need from home study to finalization
• There is a fee for the home study & updates – HS Fees can go up to $3000; updates can go up to $1000
• These agencies are required to abide by the licensing and procedural standards of their state

Questions to ask a Private Adoption Agency in regards to Special Needs Adoption:
1. Are you a non-profit agency?
2. Do you have experience with special needs adoptions?
3. (If the baby is born in your state)...Will you take custody of the baby until finalization? (I will explain this later as well)
4. Will you apply for SSI/Medicaid and help us apply for Subsidy?
Option 2: Public Adoption Agency

Your public adoption agency is through your local county department of Child & Family services, foster/adoption division

- Public agencies have custody of children who have been removed from their home due to possible neglect or abuse, or the parent has voluntarily released the child.
- There are no fees for a public agency to write your home study, but they are providing this service with the intent that you will provide foster care and possibly adopt a child within their jurisdiction.
- There is oversight; public agencies have to adhere to state mandates.

Questions to ask a public agency:
1. Will I be permitted to use my home study outside of your jurisdiction, and for public and/or private adoptions across the US?
2. (If they tell you no to question 1) Can I purchase my home study?
3. (If they tell you yes to question 1) Will you help me apply for SSI/Medicaid, help me apply for subsidy, provide post-placement services and help with finalization?
Javier is 15 years old and is currently in Kansas. He has Down syndrome and can go to any state. There are no fees to adopt Javier and a subsidy will travel with him. www.ndsan.org
Who Can Write Your Home Study – Which Goes Hand in Hand with…

Who Should I Choose for the Adoption Process?

Option 3: Attorney Assisted Adoption

An adoption attorney will provide the legal aspects of an adoption. I rarely am involved in an attorney assisted adoption.

• An attorney will refer you to a licensed home study writer, most likely a social worker. The HS will adhere to the state mandates
• There will be fees for the home study, lower adoption fees
• Some attorneys will either provide support for the birth parents or refer them to a counselor; some will work with an agency
• Attorneys involved in adoptions must adhere to the standards of the American Bar Association and applicable state and federal laws
• You will want to make sure the attorney belongs to the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, they have standards of ethical practice that the attorneys need to adhere to: http://www.adoptionattorneys.org/

Questions to ask an attorney in regards to Special Needs Adoption:

1. Do you have experience with special needs adoptions?
2. (If the baby is born in your state)…Will you take custody of the baby until finalization? (Again, I will explain this later as well)
3. Will you apply for SSI/Medicaid and help us apply for Subsidy?
James is 14 years old and is currently in the state of Washington. He has Down syndrome and can go to any state. There are no fees to adopt James and a subsidy will travel with him. www.ndsan.org
Option 4: Facilitator-Assisted Adoption

Most facilitators cannot write a home study, so facilitators are mostly used to match an adoptive family to a birth family.

- There is little to no state licensing or mandated oversight with facilitators.
- At least 15 states have restrictions against facilitators.
- In my experience, facilitated adoption fees are 2-3 times higher.

Questions to ask if you hear about a child for adoption through a facilitator:
1. What is the name of the agency in charge of the placement?
2. Is there a fee just to send in my home study?
3. Please send me an itemized statement of your fees.
4. If I am chosen for this child, will the fees increase? Can you guarantee they will not increase, can I have that in writing?
Retten is 12 years old and is currently in Ohio. He has Down syndrome and can go to any state. There are no fees to adopt Retten and a subsidy will travel with him. www.ndsan.org
Types of Domestic Adoptions

Type 1: Private Adoption – In Reference to Special Needs

- The NDSAN keeps ALL private adoptions confidential
- Private adoption: A birth family voluntarily makes an adoption plan
- Children can be any age, from newborn up to 18 years
- There is usually no cap on the amount of present children, but make sure to have an agency check with your state’s ICPC department to make sure there is no cap on the amount of children you can presently have
- ICPC – Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children – An agreement between all 50 states, that governs the placement of a child from the placing state to the receiving state.
- BUT….they may waive the cap if it’s a special needs adoption
- Most of the time, the birth family will choose exactly what they are looking for in an adoptive family
- There are fees for special needs private adoptions – Average $12,000
Station Break!

Ismaiel is almost one year old. He is currently in California and has Down syndrome. Ismaiel can go to any state. There are no fees to adopt Ismaiel and a subsidy will travel with him. www.ndsan.org
Types of Domestic Adoptions

Type 2: Public Adoption – In Reference to Special Needs

- The NDSAN posts about public adoptions on our site: http://www.ndsan.org - Click on the Waiting Children tab
- Public adoption: Children are often removed from the home due to neglect or abuse
- Children can be any age, from newborn up to 18 years
- There is usually a cap on the amount of children you can have in your home. The cap is dependent on the state the child is in
- Most of the time, the public agency will choose a family
- If you are a single parent or a gay/lesbian parent, check...
- There are no fees for a public adoption

IMPORTANT!!
There are presently 6 states who are considered “Agency-Only” States. That means that the following states will only consider home studies from a licensed child-placing agency because those states only conduct adoptions through licensed, child-placing agencies – not attorneys or facilitators. Those states at present are: CT, DE, ME, MI, ND, OR
Let’s Talk About Subsidy!

A Subsidy is also known as Adoption Assistance.

- It is a monthly payment given to families who adopt a child with special needs
- Medical coverage, therapies, and respite may also be included
- You will receive a subsidy for a child in public custody
- The subsidy comes from the sending state

A Subsidy for a Child in Private Subsidy is POSSIBLE

- Most of the time, the subsidy will come from YOUR state
- Your agency MUST be a non-profit, 501c3 adoption agency
- They would need to take custody of the child until finalization
- You or your agency needs to apply for SSI/Medicaid
- You can then apply for subsidy
- NEGOTIATE
- Do NOT finalize until you have agreed on subsidy
- Once finalized, SSI will go away – You can’t have both

YOU NEED TO GO HERE:
WWW.NACAC.ORG
CLICK ON THE “ADOPTION SUBSIDY” TAB
Alijah is almost two years old and is currently in Texas. He has Down syndrome and can go to any state. There are no fees to adopt Alijah and a subsidy will travel with him. www.ndsan.org
Joining the NDSAN Registry

If you have a completed, signed, DOMESTIC, updated home study, you can join the NDSAN registry!

- Your worker needs to send your home study to me
- The NDSAN Registration form
- The Family profile

How the Registry works

- We are NOT a waiting list!
- The birth family tells us what they are looking for in a potential adoptive family
- The birth family tells us about their child
- We input the birth family information into the registry
- It kicks out a report of potential families
- I will contact you if your name is on that report
- It’s okay to say no!
- Stay current with your home study

FAQs

- Wait time?
- Do you charge fees?
- Can I use my international home study?
What Can You Do RIGHT NOW?

• Educate yourself on Down syndrome
  (Use correct language – Down syndrome)
  Head to www.ndss.org
Tyler is 15 years old and is currently in Ohio. He has Down syndrome and can go to any state. There are no fees to adopt Tyler and a subsidy will travel with him.

www.ndsan.org
What Can You Do RIGHT NOW?

• Contact your local Down syndrome parent group
  www.ndss.org – Resources tab – Local Support
  Join the mailing list
  Attend workshops
  Volunteer

• Get started on creating your family profile
  Email me at stephanie@ndsan.org

In Closing.....

• One constant about adoption – It changes all the time!
  • Patience and Peace
  • I’ve got your back! stephanie@ndsan.org
  • Thank you