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**Birth, Adoption, And Infertility—Applications**

**Questionnaire: Am I Eligible To Adopt A Child?**

Adoption laws vary from state to state and, in the case of international adoptions, from country to country. In addition, certain agencies may apply more restrictive criteria to prospective adoptive parents. There are, however, a few general guidelines that apply in most instances, as illustrated by the statements below. As you read through them, check all that apply. Your adoption attorney can go over your responses with you and help you determine the best route for starting your family.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am eighteen years old or older, but not over fifty.

The age limits vary from country to country, and some put lower limits on parental age. In some instances, however, one or both parents can be older than fifty, such as when an older child or a child who is in foster care in the United States is being adopted. Some countries base their age restrictions on the difference between the child's and the parent's age, and still others mandate that there be only so much difference between the ages of the parents themselves.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have been married for at least two years.

Although being married allows for the broadest selection of adoption alternatives, many single people also adopt successfully. In addition, previous divorces (often limited to one per prospective parent) generally do not disqualify persons from adopting.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have saved enough money to cover the costs of adoption.

Adoptions can be very expensive, and saving in advance can be prudent. It is not, however, the only way to fund an adoption. Many people borrow from their retirement savings or against the equity in their homes, or receive loans from family members. Sometimes, a church will sponsor an adoption for one of its parishioners. Employers, too, may offer adoption benefits. The adoption tax credit can offset some or all of the financial burden accompanying the adoption process. Note, too, that some adoptions, such as those involving special needs children or children in domestic foster care, can be achieved for lower or even no cost.

\_\_\_\_\_ I earn enough money to cover the expenses of raising a child.

We've all heard about how much it costs to raise a child to the age of eighteen, to say nothing of the costs of a college education. Income is an important consideration, especially in single-

parent adoptions, as well as those involving two parents, if one intends to quit working after the child arrives.

\_\_\_\_\_ My employment is stable.

This concern may be relevant not only to a determination of financial stability, but also to a general finding of responsibility and maturity.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am in good health.

Rules regarding certain disabilities are relaxing, but you will generally need to provide proof that you have a good life expectancy and that you can manage the physical demands of caring for a child.

\_\_\_\_\_ My home is clean and safe and can accommodate the needs of a child

You do not need to live in a palace to qualify to adopt. A simple home or apartment is acceptable, as long as it will provide a safe environment and room for the child to play, explore, and grow.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not have a criminal record.

Although minor infractions, like unpaid parking tickets, are generally of no consequence (even these minor offenses may, however, require a written explanation), more serious charges are of greater concern. Previous charges of child abuse are likely to disqualify you as an adoptive parent.

Additional factors such as religion, fertility status, and educational background may be important to certain agencies, countries, or birth parents, but they do not have general significance. Perhaps the most important qualification to be an adoptive parent is the hardest to quantify—your capacity to love and nurture the child that is placed in your family.