

**CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA (CWLA)  
STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE FOR ADOPTION SERVICES**

**“The agency providing adoption services should support efforts to ensure that adults who were adopted have direct access to identifying information about themselves and their birth parents.”**

This quote is taken from Section 6.22 of the revised Child Welfare League of America Standards of Excellence for Adoption Services. This is the first update of these standards since 1988. It was printed in January 2000 by the CWLA.

*CWLA is the largest national affiliation of child placing agencies in the US. They are seen as setting the standards for child placement practice in the US. These standards are a tremendous step forward. Copies of the full standards are available by calling 1-800-407-6273 or at [www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org).*

Child Welfare League of America  
Standards of Excellence for Adoption Services  
Sections related to Access to Identifying Information  
Updated and Printed January 2000

**Section 6  
The Practice of Adoption: Postplacement and Postlegalization Services**

**6.22 Access to Identifying Information**

The agency providing adoption services should support efforts to ensure that adults who were adopted have direct access to identifying information about themselves and their birth parents. [2.7 {see below}]

The prevailing legal practice in the United States prohibits adults who were adopted as children from obtaining access to their original birth certificates or to identifying information contained in their adoption records.

The practice of sealing records had come under scrutiny as the benefits of openness in adoption for the adopted individual, birth parents, and adoptive parents have come to be understood. [1.17 {see below}] The interests of adopted adults in having information about their origins have come to be recognized as having critical psychological importance as well as importance in understanding their health and genetic status. Because such information is essential to adopted adults' identity and health needs, the agency should promote policies that provide adopted adults with direct access to identifying information. [7.7 {see below}]

This trend toward openness has already been recognized by the Indian Child Welfare Act (P.L. 95-608). Under that Act courts must unseal records for American Indian children, on request, and provide any information

necessary for the adopted individual to ascertain his or her tribal affiliation and membership. Such information may include the names of the adopted child's birth parents.

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**Section 2  
The Practice of Adoption: Services for Birth Parents**

**2.7 Disclosure of Birth Parent Identifying Information to Adopted Individuals**

The Agency providing adoption services should advise birth parents who are making a plan for the adoption of their child that information related to their identities may be disclosed to the child at some point in the future. [1.17, 6.22] Many birth parents may express an interest in having their identities disclosed to the child whom they place for adoption at the time the child reaches adulthood. The agency providing adoption services should obtain, in writing, the birth parents' interest in having such information provided and should retain the birth parents' written statement in the adoption record.