



NEW YORK STATE CITIZENS' COALITION FOR CHILDREN, INC.

Adoptive Parents Support Access to Original Birth Certificates

Efforts to keep adoption records secret are out of step with adoptive parents' clear support for their children's right to know the identity of their birth parents.

A 1995 study conducted by Rosemary Avery, PhD, at Cornell University found that parents of adopted children in New York overwhelmingly favor laws that would allow adult adoptees access to their original birth certificates. While adoptive parents are frequently cited as barriers to increased openness in adoption, the study showed the opposite is true.

Based on a survey of 1,274 adoptive parents in 743 adoptive homes in New York, 83 percent of adoptive mothers and 73 percent of adoptive fathers believe adult adoptees should be able to obtain a copy of their original birth certificates. Only 9 percent of adoptive mothers and 11 percent of adoptive fathers believe they should not have access.

The study also explored adoptive parents' attitudes concerning retroactive access to identifying information. Seventy-eight percent of adoptive mothers and 66 percent of adoptive fathers believe all adult adoptees should have the right to obtain an original birth certificate, regardless of when they were adopted.

Findings were based on a very diverse sample of parents who lived in rural and urban areas, adopted through public and private agencies, and adopted children of various ages.

Adoptive parents understand their children's need for a full sense of their identity, including their birth and adoptive family histories. We realize that knowledge of their biological parents is our children's birthright, and we support the right of adult adoptees to have what every other citizen takes for granted - their original birth certificate.

Judith Ashton
Executive Director

January 26, 2005