

La Familia Inc.



"The Children's Safety Net"

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WORKING WITH LA FAMILIA

ADOPTION SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

First, let us congratulate you on taking one of the first steps in the exciting and sometimes complicated process of building a family through adoption. Our primary goal is to help children find permanent, loving, and safe homes within families. We work directly with birthfamilies to provide intensive and comprehensive options counseling in order to help them make decisions based on sound information, love and respect for themselves and their child. La Familia's staff understands that adoptive parents have usually undergone an immense amount of emotional and physical challenges prior to seeking adoption services. All services provided by La Familia will be focused on empowering adoptive families to explore adoptive parenting issues in a gentle manner that is respectful of the heavy emotional investment. La Familia, Inc. believes that adoption is not a one-time event; instead, it is a life long process of growth, commitment and development. To help families deal with adoption as a life experience, La Familia provides ongoing professional and peer support.

CONCURRENT ADOPTION ACTIVITY

La Familia places no restrictions on any other attempts you may make to achieve an adoption. You can be a client in good standing with La Familia and pursue a private adoption or work with another agency. We ask that you keep your worker updated as to the status of your endeavors. You must inform us if you have been rejected by another agency, and you must agree to sign a release of information that allows us to talk with other agencies about your status.

PRE-PLACEMENT STUDIES

The home study or pre-placement study is a complete family assessment. At a minimum, each family assessment includes one joint meeting with the entire prospective adoptive family, individual meetings with each family member, and a session in the family home. In addition, each family must prepare and submit the required documentation prior to the initiation of the interview portion of the assessment. The Criminal Background Check and CYFD Abuse and Neglect check must be initiated prior to beginning the

meetings. Everyone who petitions to adopt a child must cooperate with a home study. This involves interviews with everyone in the adopting household, a visit to the home, medical examinations, reference checks, employment and financial verifications, criminal records checks, and verification of marriages, births, and divorces. La Familia can also request that you be seen by an independent mental health professional and undergo psychological testing as part of your home study. After your assessment is completed, your caseworker will present the assessment to the other members of the adoption department. At this meeting, your assessment will be approved, approved with stipulations, or disapproved.

Your home study is for the use of La Familia. Should you wish to pursue other avenues, a transfer fee of \$250.00 may apply if the documentation is to be furnished to another agency. La Familia recognizes valid home studies completed by other agencies or by private practice professionals. If you have a valid home study, La Familia will review it, modify it as needed to meet the agency's requirements, and may charge you \$400.00 for our services. According to state law, home studies go out of date in one year but can be updated. Home studies from other agencies and private investigators can also be updated. Minor errors (e.g., incorrect dates or figures) will be fixed on notice. The judgments, decisions and recommendations of the investigator can be questioned. Any concerns can be directed to the Director of the Adoption department or the Executive Director. Under special circumstances, modifications to the home study can be negotiated. If the conclusions of the home study are unfavorable to you, La Familia staff will meet with you to discuss how the problem areas may be adjusted. If issues or concerns arise during the assessment that your case worker feels she/he needs more information about, additional assessment information and/or counseling may be required. This may include but is not limited to physician's reports, counseling reports, consultations, and family counseling. It can happen that La Familia disapproves your application and recommends that you terminate with us. You will be billed for the time spent on the home study to that point.

APPLICATION CRITERIA

The following minimal criteria must be met before the agency approves a family for an adoptive placement.

- 1) The adopting parents must be at least 18 years old each.
- 2) The marital relationship must be stable. If the adopting parent is single, emotional stability must be clearly demonstrated.
- 3) No one in the adopting household can have a criminal conviction for child abuse, neglect or abandonment. Applicants who have other criminal convictions such as assault or driving while intoxicated will be considered on an individual basis.
- 4) No one in the adopting family can have a communicable or infectious disease at the time of the child's placement.
- 5) No family who refuses to cooperate with the home study requirements will be approved.
- 6) Evidence of financial responsibility must be clearly shown by paying fees for services when billed.

TYPES OF ADOPTION

La Familia helps families facilitate open adoptions, semi-open adoptions and fully closed adoptions. All clients have the right to request the type of adoption that they are comfortable creating. Your worker will discuss the pros and cons of each type and provide reading material, peer support referrals and theoretical

and research findings. La Familia evaluates each situation to determine whether contact is beneficial to the child, adoptive family, and birth family's best interests. We will also provide recommendations on maintaining family ties and provide support, supervision and facilitation for families who choose to build open adoptions. Adoptive families and biological families will be asked to participate in mediation focused on a written contact in adoption agreement that will address the needs of all parties involved.

MATCHING SERVICES

When a birth parent selects a family she/he would like to meet, La Familia staff will schedule a Match Meeting between the birth family and the prospective adoptive family. A staff member will be present to facilitate this meeting and any meetings thereafter where either party requests our presence. Several topics are covered during match meetings, such as openness to continued contact, family traditions, child rearing beliefs and practices and any other issue of concern to the biological family or adoptive family. Please consult your worker for more information.

PLACEMENT SERVICES

Most of the infants we place go directly into their adoptive families from the hospital. For a variety of circumstances, some infants enter Cradle Care and then are placed with their adoptive family a few days later. Our services include preparing the correct papers for the biological parents to sign after the baby is born to authorize placement with the prospective adoptive family, coordinating the discharge of the child and the biological mother with hospital staff, preparing, reviewing and signing placement documents with the adoptive family and being consistently available for additional counseling and support to all participants in the process. The worker is usually present at the hospital to help mediate relationships with biological family, adoptive family, hospital staff and attorneys. Your worker will spend time with you on the date of placement to review the appropriate documents and procedures. These include: Full Disclosure of Information Regarding the Child, Social and Medical of the biological parents, Legal Risk Disclosure and Acknowledgment and the Placement Agreement.

POST PLACEMENT SERVICES

La Familia, Inc.'s goal is to assist all families in making a successful adjustment to their new family. Supervision after a child is placed in an adoptive home is required by New Mexico law. These services will begin at placement and continue until finalization. In New Mexico, post placement supervision is required for three to six months after placement. The first visit will be within 72 hours of placement. After that visit, your worker will schedule face-to-face visits until finalization. Additional visits or referrals may be required in certain cases. All required reports will be submitted to court prior to finalization and will remain a permanent part of the case record.

CONSENT TO THE ADOPTION

You must be prepared to settle your bill with La Familia before the finalization of your adoption. As a not for profit organization, La Familia does not have the financial resources to provide financing of your adoption fees. There is an interest charge of 1.5% per month assessed against your account for balances unpaid from the time of initial billing. We do make specialized payment arrangements on a case-by-case basis. Please discuss this possibility with your worker.

FINALIZATION OF THE ADOPTION

La Familia controls the timing of its adoptions in accordance with the New Mexico Adoption Code. The law sets forth minimum and maximum times for events to occur, e.g., “The court may grant a final decree of adoption if it finds that the adoptee has been in the actual custody of the petitioner for a period of ninety days”. La Familia may choose to allow an adoption to finalize in the minimum 90 days, or it may not allow an adoption to finalize for an extended period. The reasons may be clinical, administrative, procedural or otherwise important for a particular adoption.

POST FINALIZATION SERVICES

These include services provided by La Familia following the legal finalization of an adoption. These services are available for as long as the family requests services. They include: training, resources and referral information, consultation, additional social or medical information when available, exchange of pictures and letters between the birth family and adoptive family, annual picnic and holiday party, informal networking and support between adoptive families and mediation meetings. If a family needs additional services, La Familia will make an appropriate referral to a respected resource in the community. There is no cost for these services.

LEGAL COUNSEL

Attorneys must represent both the adopting parents and the birth parents. The adopting parents pay all attorney fees. Adoption is a very specialized field of law, and La Familia has developed relationships with lawyers experienced in child placement issues. La Familia prefers to work with attorneys the agency already knows, and the agency will provide you with a lawyer referral list. La Familia staff cannot provide you with any legal advice.

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION

Every International adoption is as unique as the country your child will come from. We have arrangements with several international agencies to provide services to families seeking international adoption. Please let your worker know which agency you have chosen and the country you are selecting.

INTERSTATE COMPACT ON THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN (ICPC)

This is a federal regulation that governs the transfer of children across state lines. When a child leaves or enters New Mexico, these procedures must be followed. La Familia, Inc. will prepare the necessary documents and written reports to meet all applicable laws in both states. This will take several days to complete. After completion, the packet is sent overnight mail to the ICPC Administrator. After New Mexico’s administrator has approved the packet, it is sent overnight to the family’s home state for review by that state’s administrator. Families should be prepared to remain in their child’s birth state for up to two weeks. Families may not leave or enter New Mexico until the ICPC Administrator grants verbal approval. Please be patient in the knowledge that La Familia staff places a high priority on these cases and will make every effort to help complete the process as soon as possible.

We look forward to working with you!

ADOPTION COSTS

Please review this section carefully. When you begin contracting with La Familia, you must sign billing and service agreements that refer to this section.

TYPICAL ADOPTION COSTS at La Familia, Inc.

Application and Intake Fee	\$ 350
Domestic Home Study	\$1400
International Home Study	\$1850
Adoption Preparation Workshops (7)	\$ 500
Placement Fee	\$8500
Counseling for Bio Parents & Profile Presentation Fee	\$2500
Post Placement Services	\$1000
Doula Services (if applicable)	\$ 400
FBI Criminal Background Check for each person over age 16 :	\$ 39.25

Explanation of Possible Charges:

PRELIMINARY APPLICATION \$350

(This includes the first orientation interview with a staff member.)

This is a set of written materials describing La Familia, and an application form. This non-refundable fee is payable when you submit your completed application. After we receive your completed application, we will call you to set up the orientation interview. At this session, you will be introduced to the services available at La Familia, and you will be asked to provide additional background information.

DOMESTIC PREPLACEMENT STUDY \$1400

The home study involves: 1) a joint interview with the adopting couple and with all members of the applicants' household, 2) individual interviews with the applicants and with other household members as required, 3) a home visit, 4) contacts with personal references, 5) medical examinations for the applicants, 6) FBI criminal records check, local police check and CYFD Abuse and Neglect Check 7) verifications of income, birth, marriage and divorces, 9) other collateral interviews or verifications as required. Existing home studies will be modified as needed. The cost will be based on the amount of time required to complete the modifications. Studies are valid for one year. A pre-placement study can be updated for \$600.

INTERNATIONAL PREPLACEMENT STUDY \$1850

Families who seek to adopt internationally need an especially detailed, specific study focused on issues required by the chosen country. In international adoption, laws and requirements change frequently. This

fee covers extra notary services for dossier paperwork, review and assistance compiling required paperwork and continued and on-going cooperation with your international agency.

ADOPTION PREPARATION WORKSHOP SERIES

\$500

La Familia has developed a comprehensive series of workshops designed to help prospective adoptive families learn about the issues surrounding adoption and meet other families who are also involved in the process. The workshops include: Adoption Process, Child Development through the Adoption Life Cycle, Grief and Loss, Open v. Closed Adoption, Infant/ Child CPR, and Basic Infant Care. The optional sessions are: Medical Issues, International Adoption, Transracial Adoption, Adoption Law and Procedure, Therapeutic Crisis Intervention and Expanding Your Options. In addition, all La Familia families have unlimited access to support groups and agency functions. ***Additional charge for CPR/First Aid and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention.

PROFILE PRESENTATION & BIRTHPARENT COUNSELING

\$2500

When your preplacement study has been completed, you can choose to create a birthparent profile (pictures and letter to birthparents) that will be shown to clients in La Familia's Pregnancy Counseling program if they choose to make an adoption plan. This fee will cover unlimited adoption counseling for birthparents who choose to place their children with adoptive families. Most of the clients La Familia services participate in over 45 hours of counseling during the pregnancy and in the 6 months immediately following the adoption. La Familia believes that it is vital to the continuing wellbeing of each birthparent that counseling continues to be available at no charge. While adult parents must have at least one counseling session by law and minor birth parents must be seen at least twice, the amount of counseling varies with the needs of the individual birth parent. La Familia also recommends that the birth parent be counseled after the relinquishment. The needs of birth parents vary, but La Familia believes that it is very important to provide necessary services.

POST PLACEMENT SERVICES

\$1000

After a child is placed in your home, the state requires that a routine post-placement investigation is conducted. These visits result in monthly reports and a final report that is required by the court prior to finalization. Your worker will visit with you and your child once a month (or as directed by your International placing agency) until the adoption decree is entered. These visits can take place either at your home or the La Familia office. Telephone contact between you and the agency will occur every two weeks until finalization. This fee may be higher if you choose to complete an international adoption with a country that requires more extensive longterm post placement services.

INTERMEDIARY SERVICES

No Charge

Some birth parents and adoptive couples want to keep in contact with each other after the adoption.

La Familia is available to help with the transmission of pictures and letters.

PLACEMENT FEE

\$8500

La Familia charges the adopting family \$8500 if the agency finds the child that is placed with you. Families who adopt through La Familia's networking contacts do not pay La Familia's placement fee. However, the family is responsible for the placing agency's placement fee.

FACILITATION FEE (Interstate or International adoption)

\$1000 - \$3500

If a child is placed in your home from outside the state of New Mexico, an interstate facilitation fee will be charged depending on the amount of time spent on your case. Interstate placements require cooperation between the agencies involved and the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children Administrator in each state's capital city. This process includes a great deal of paperwork and specialized attention. In the case of an independent adoption that requires a comparable time commitment to an agency adoption, a facilitation fee will be charged to cover expenses such as conversations with attorneys, facilitators, birth parents and other involved parties. This fee will also cover your worker to provide services at the hospital at the time of the child's birth and mediation of services between hospital staff.

LEGAL FEES

La Familia prefers to provide the necessary legal representation for you and for the birth parents through our referral list of lawyers. Please discuss adoption issues and experience with your attorney. Legal fees vary widely. The agency is available to discuss with you the standard fees charged in this area for adoption work. La Familia will arrange for the attorney to bill you directly for all legal services provided to you and to your child's birthparents.

MEDICAL COSTS

Your expenses will vary depending on the birth mother's medical insurance. In the vast majority of adoptions, the birthmother's medical costs will be covered by Medicaid or private insurance. In addition, we will attempt to locate alternative medical coverage if possible. However, any expenses not covered will be the responsibility of the adopting family. In most cases, La Familia will have matched you with a birthmother before the child's birth. The billing arrangements will have been set up between you and the hospitals and physicians by the time of the birth. In general, the child's medical expenses will be covered by your insurance in an infant adoption.

DOULA SERVICES

\$400

La Familia staff is available 24 hours a day to provide support to women in labor. This support includes travel to the hospital, emotional encouragement throughout the entire birth process, specialized labor

intervention suggestions and mediation with hospital staff. The support person(s) are also available to adoptive family members who are attending the birth for emotional support.

TRAVEL COSTS

\$25.00 per hr.

La Familia reimburses its social workers for mileage to travel to and from your home. You will be billed for travel in excess of 25 miles from our Albuquerque office.

PREGNANCY RELATED EXPENSES

Birth parents may be reimbursed for directly related pregnancy expenses. This is a strictly regulated and highly scrutinized aspect of adoptions. Before asking an adoptive family to cover any expenses for a birthparent, La Familia, Inc. will attempt to locate any other resources available to the client. La Familia does not disburse money directly to birthparents; instead any payments are made directly to the vendor (ie. PNM, Landlord etc.)

THE GOOD NEWS...

The federal government has recently passed an Adoption Tax Credit of \$10,960. Families can receive credit for documented adoption related expenses in the year an adoption is attempted (domestic) or finalized (international).

We hope this packet explains some of the issues you will encounter as you work with La Familia. Please feel free to contact us with your questions. We look forward to working with you.