

A GUIDE TO SEARCH AND REUNION IN ADOPTION



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Table of Contents:

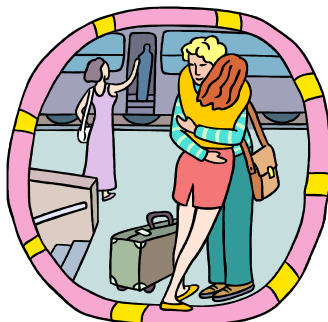
1. Introduction	2
2. What is Search and Reunion?	3
3. Issues Associated with Search	6
4. Issues Associated with Reunion	10
5. Issues Associated with Relationship Building	14
6. How to Search in New Jersey	17
7. International Search	20
8. Support Groups and Related Conferences	22
9. Recommended reading list for Search and Reunion	24

I. INTRODUCTION

Many in the adoption community struggle with the question of whether they have a right to search for a birth family member or for the child for whom they made an adoption plan. The professional adoption community regards search as a normal part of growing up adopted and sees the possibility of healing as an important outcome. The purpose of this handbook is to give members of the adoption community and adoption professionals the information they need on how to search. We will also include a discussion of some of the many issues that the various members of the community encounter on the journey of the search. An overview of reunions and the process of building relationships post-reunion will be discussed.

While we can offer ideas and suggestions, we strongly encourage those involved in the search process to work closely with an adoption agency that provides search and reunion services or with an adoption specialist. We additionally recommend that the searchers and those people found join an adoption support group that can offer both support and information about this very complex and life-altering event.

The purpose of this booklet is not to cover every topic in great depth. Instead our goal is to summarize the issues and give information on how to access services in the state of New Jersey.



II. WHAT IS SEARCH AND REUNION?



Searching – It's a word implying ongoing, unresolved activity. It is movement towards something that is slightly beyond reach. (With searching, one person is doing the action, while the other is on the receiving end of the action; there is the person searching and the person being sought.)

The search in adoption can be broken down into three important parts but does not necessarily need to include all three parts: (1) the search itself, which the searcher pursues with or without support and can go on for years; (2) the reunion, a moment which when the searcher and the individual(s) being found agree to come together and meet in person, most often preceded by telephone calls, letters, or emails; and (3) relationship building, the development of a relationship with ongoing contact, the final and most complex stage of the Search and Reunion journey.

Who is Searching and for whom are they Searching?

In the adoption community, historically it has been female adult adoptees searching for the birthmother. In recent years the searchers now include: male adult adoptees, adoptive families of minors and adult children, birthmothers and birthfathers and their adult children (who are the siblings of adult children for whom an adoption plan was made).

The majority of adopted persons first consider searching for their birthmothers. This may be related to the psychological and physical bond to the birthmother that occurred during pregnancy and birth. Many adopted persons are curious to know if they have siblings and are interested in meeting and establishing

relationships with them. This can only happen if the birthmother is open to giving her birth son or daughter information about any other children she had. Many adopted persons go on to search for their birthfathers after they have met and established a relationship with their birthmothers. It may be several months to several years before an adopted person feels ready to embark on the search for his or her birthfather. It often takes some time to integrate the birthmother and her family in her/his life before reaching out to another birth parent that may or may not know of his or her existence. The adopted person is often committed to learning about both sides of his or her birth family, as knowing the birthmother and her family only provides 50 percent of the social and medical history.

The last 10 years have seen a growing number of birthmothers searching for their birth sons and daughters. These birthmothers are mostly under 60 years old and tend to be more self confident and proactive than the birthmothers of the 1950s and before. The attention to search and reunion in the media has encouraged more birthmothers to come out of the closet and look for the children they lost through adoption.

Birthfathers, although in much fewer numbers than birthmothers, are also searching for their birth sons and daughters. They have lived with the knowledge of their children for many years and, like birthmothers, they have experienced many similar feelings of loss, guilt, and regret.

Another group searching for birth relatives is children of birth parents who are eager to establish contact with siblings who were adopted. They may have just learned about their adopted siblings or have known for some time but have just been given the information and go ahead to search by their mothers. Or their mothers, who may not have been comfortable searching, have died, and their children now feel freer to search for their adopted siblings without the worry of hurting a parent.

More and more adoptive parents are becoming aware of how an adoption psychologically impacts one's life and are encouraging their sons and daughters

to initiate a search for their birth families. Some adoptive parents are themselves initiating a search for their children's birth parents in an effort to get information that will be helpful.

Not all searches will result in a reunion. A number of birth parents who are found, between 10 and 20%, do not agree to contact but will usually provide important medical history. Some adopted persons will find that the birth parent has died; however, they may be fortunate enough to meet birth family members who are open to providing information and establishing a relationship. Many adopted people searching are focused on the search and are doubtful that they will ever find the person they are searching for, or are so convinced they will be rejected that they are totally unprepared for a reunion. Therefore, the adoptee may move slowly after initial contact has been made via letters, e-mail, and telephone calls before setting up an actual meeting. A meeting may not lead to a developing relationship as the searcher and/or the person found may be satisfied with brief contact.

The search and reunion process is likened to a roller coaster with many ups and downs. It is, therefore, recommended that people searching prepare themselves for this uncharted journey by educating themselves about the complex issues by reading some of the many search and reunion books, attending support groups, attending adoption conferences, and engaging in counseling with an adoption specialist.

III- ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH SEARCH

The Adopted Person

It is believed that all adopted persons search on some level, whether on a conscious or unconscious level. They may be in active pursuit or they may be passive searchers who study a roomful of strangers for people who resemble them and who, therefore, might be related to them.

Active adopted searchers come from adoptive families that are loving, caring, and sensitive. They also come from dysfunctional families who have been unable to meet the emotional needs of the adoptee. The reasons for searching on the part of or by adopted persons from both groups are quite similar. Dr. Robert Anderson explains that adopted persons search for a variety of reasons. There are external rational reasons like medical information, a desire to thank the birth parent, and curiosity about what traits have been inherited, and then there are deeper motivations that relate to identity and “genealogical bewilderment.” Adopted persons are often in touch with some or all of the following: a sense of loss, a feeling of not being grounded and lacking focus in their lives, a general sense of dissatisfaction, a feeling of never quite belonging, or feeling that they are not complete people. Adopted persons speak often about a void in their lives or say that their lives are a puzzle with some missing pieces. Adopted persons hope that the search will fill in the missing pieces and provide an increased sense of normalcy and identity.

There is no right age or time for adopted persons to search. There needs to be an emotional maturity, self confidence and readiness to navigate the uncharted course often involved in the search process. The average age of adopted persons who search is in their thirties, with most falling between 18 and 60 years old. Many adopted persons decide to search after they have become independent of their adoptive parents, have completed their education or are somewhat established in a job. Many women search after they have established their own families and have begun to think seriously about their own (birth) parents, who they are, their medical histories, who their children resemble, etc. Some feel an

awakening, a realization of a loss that has affected their entire lives. We often see many adopted men initiate a search after their wives have strongly encouraged them to do it, believing that it would be important to have the information for the sake of their children.

A concern that many adopted persons share is a fear of hurting their adoptive parents if they were to initiate a search. They often mistakenly assume that their adoptive parents will be threatened or angry and not understand their motivation to search. Rather than engage their parents in a conversation about their motives for searching, many adopted persons choose not to tell their parents and search secretly, choose not to search at all as they do not want to risk hurting their relationship with their adoptive parents, or wait until their adoptive parents have died and then search. For those fortunate adopted persons who share with their adoptive parents their need to search and whose parents are supportive, we have found those relationships to become stronger after the search has been completed.

The search process is very emotionally consuming for the adopted person. Normal life is put on the back burner for a period of time while much of his or her energy is focused on the search. The search may not progress smoothly but may be a start-and-stop process during which the adopted person is dealing with fears of rejection, anger, and a lack of readiness to deal with the intense feelings that may be surfacing. It is extremely helpful if there is a support system of family, spouse, or friends who can understand the feelings and sometimes irrational behavior that the adopted person often presents. The end result of the search not only is life-altering for the adopted person but has a ripple effect on those people close to him. For example, the spouse of an adopted person may need to be accepting of another in-law in his or her life and another grandparent to their children. Also, adoptive parents may need to accept the birth parents as new members of the family.

Birth Parents

There are many reasons that birth parents search for their birth sons and daughters. As with the adopted person, the adoption decision has shaped the lives of birth parents, often leaving them with unresolved feelings of loss, guilt, anger, and resentment. Birth parents often recognize that the only way they can attempt to resolve some of these feelings is to establish contact with their birth children. A large number of birth parents wish to update the adopted person with a medical history. Their motivation may or may not include a desire to meet and establish a relationship with the adopted person. Some birth parents may initiate a search to resolve the long-standing questions of whether adoption was the right decision and did the agency fulfill the promise of placing the child in a secure and loving adoptive family. Finding answers to these questions can be very healing for birth parents.

Many birth parents are very hesitant to search as they do not feel they have the right to intrude on the lives of their birth children. They report that they would be happy to be found but believe that only the adopted person, not the birth parent, has the right to search. Some are very fearful of rejection or making a person aware he or she is adopted when he or she may not be aware of it. More often than not, birth parents initiating a search are either unmarried, having been divorced, widowed or never married. A single birth parent who may or may not have told other children about the child that was adopted, does not have to consider the feelings of a spouse or how a search will impact the marriage.

Most birth parents who are searching would like to establish a friendship and to be included in the lives of their birth children. They generally are very respectful of the adoptive parents and in no way wish to assume the parental role or violate the special relationships that have been established over the years.

Adoptive Parents

With increasing awareness of the role of genetics in influencing a person's physical and mental health, adoptive parents whose children, some of whom are

minors, are experiencing serious health problems are initiating searches for their children's birth families. They are attempting to assist health professionals treating their children by getting complete medical histories from the birth families. Often times when the adopted person's problems are psychological in nature, the adoptive parent initiates a search in the hopes that a reunion will "cure" the person of those symptoms. The adoptive parents' fantasies regarding the search should be fully explored in order to avoid later disappointment.

Some adoptive parents of minors who have voiced a desire to meet their birth parents have conducted searches for the birth parents in an effort to respond to the child's need to have a reunion. It is recommended that the decision to search for a minor's birth parents be made after consultation and guidance with an adoption specialist.

IV. ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH REUNION

Most birth parents who are found are open to some form of contact with their birth sons and daughters. Initially, birth parents are quite overwhelmed and need to take some time to sort out their feelings and conflicting emotions before deciding if and how they should respond.

For those birthmothers who have told their husbands and families about the adoption, their decision for contact is usually positive. It appears that the more open a birthmother has been about her unwed pregnancy with the significant people in her life, the more likely she will be open to a reunion. However, complications may occur when a spouse who easily was able to accept a wife's previous pregnancy is unable to support the idea of a reunion as he contemplates how his family's life will change. Although children of the birthmother may initially be pleased to learn about their adopted sibling, they may, as the reunion progresses, find themselves feeling left out or jealous of all the attention their new sibling is receiving.

Those birthmothers who have kept the adoption a secret from husbands, families, and friends may be very hesitant to agree to have contact and may choose only to share medical history information. They fear that their marriages may be in jeopardy, or they may be concerned that their children cannot accept the adopted sibling or may be negatively affected by the knowledge of their adopted sibling, or they may not want to risk being negatively judged by family and friends. Although initially rejecting a reunion, many birthmothers, with the help of counseling and support from social workers, have been able to share their secrets with their families and thus have felt freer to have contact with their birth sons and daughters. Although the consequence of sharing the secret of the adoption has not always been positive, many birthmothers have been pleasantly surprised by their family's acceptance of the unwed pregnancy, thus allowing them to move on in their lives unburdened with guilt and shame and negative feelings about themselves.

Some birthmothers who have kept the adoption a secret for many years refuse contact with the adoptee because they have pushed away the painful feelings associated with the adoption and are very fearful of returning to that difficult period in their lives. They do not wish to relive the trauma of the adoption and may be afraid that reliving those feelings will cause them to emotionally break down in some way. These birthmothers may have achieved some level of stability in their lives and are too afraid of disturbing their equilibrium by opening up a painful chapter of their lives. These birthmothers may be so upset and angry at being found that they may be unwilling to provide the adoptee with any medical or social history information. Some birthmothers who are going through a difficult time in their lives when they are found may refuse to have a reunion but may be open to it at some later date.

Birthfathers who are found face many of the same issues as birthmothers. They may not want their wives to know of their previous affairs and may be concerned that the presence of an adopted son or daughter will upset their families. Fortunately, many birthfathers do agree to have contact with their adopted children and have had the opportunity, as have birthmothers, to resolve old losses, guilt and regrets.

Some birthfathers who never suspected they were birthfathers have been located and are quite surprised to learn they have an adopted son or daughter. (The birthmother may have shared the birthfather's name with the agency but never informed the birthfather that she was pregnant.) Some birthfathers in this situation are quite angry to learn that the pregnancy and adoption was not shared with them, feeling that they possibly might have chosen to have the child raised by their family. Learning years later that he is a birthfather can make him doubt his paternity, and he may require DNA testing to verify that he is the birthfather. Not having lived with the knowledge that he is a birthfather may make it difficult for him to feel an emotional or genetic connection to this birth stranger, and he may therefore choose not to have contact with the adoptee. There have been a fair number of such birthfathers who have later agreed to have a reunion and have gone on to establish positive relationships.

Most adopted persons who are found by their birth parents are agreeable to a reunion. Many more adopted women than adopted men are open to contact. Those adopted men who refuse contact usually have lived with a great deal of denial concerning their adoptions and do not want to face painful feelings that they have attempted to avoid. They do not want to deal with feelings of loss, anger, rejection, sadness, etc. They prefer to pretend to themselves that their adoption never really mattered that much and say that they have given it very little thought. Some adopted men who have felt rejected by their adoption and are angry at their birth parents use the opportunity to refuse a reunion as a way to get even with their birth parents. It seems that more adopted women are open to a reunion because they have thought more about their feelings about their adoptions. Women who are mothers or are contemplating having a family often think about the person who brought them into the world and come to appreciate the difficult sacrifice their birthmothers had to make. These women feel an awakening, a realization of a loss that has affected their entire lives.

Like birth parents who have been found, adoptees need time to deal with their feelings, especially if they have not given much thought to searching. Many adoptees prefer to be the searcher as opposed to the person being found. Sarah Saffian, in her book, *Ithaka*, describes feeling angry at not being in control of her birth parents' search for her. Because control was such a big issue for her, as it is for many adoptees, she took three years before she agreed to meet her birth parents.

Experience has shown that there are invariably many bumps in the road even when both sides are pleased to be found and have agreed to have a reunion. The adoptee may find that the reunion has brought up many feelings he or she did not anticipate. The birth parent may not understand these feelings and be confused when the adoptee withdraws from the relationship and needs to take a break. The adoptee may feel that the birthmother is too "motherly" and demanding of his or her time. By meeting his or her birthparent(s) and learning about his or her background and heritage, the adoptee is forced to give up all of his/her previous fantasies. Regardless of how positive the information is, the

process of integrating the new knowledge often causes the adoptee to experience a sense of loss and resulting sadness. The adoptee may have entertained the fantasy that a reunion would change his or her life for the better, only to realize that he or she will always be an adopted person with personal struggles and challenges ahead. The adoptee might be very disappointed to learn unpleasant and difficult information about his or her birth family. The adopted person may find at the end of a search that a birth parent has died, and experience a great sense of sadness and regret at not having done the search earlier. The birth parent may also be disappointed to learn that a son or daughter did not grow up in a loving home, but faced many hardships that could not be overcome. The birth parent may experience a great deal of guilt and regret in knowing that the adoption decision was not a good one for the child. These are only a few examples of issues that may arise after a reunion.

Despite the difficult outcomes of many reunions, the majority of adopted persons and birth parents do not regret the decision to search and believe that the search, despite a rejection or finding a deceased birth parent, has been very helpful in enabling them to move on in their lives.

V. ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Most of the literature available on search and reunion stops at the beginning of the reunion and gives little insight, other than anecdotal stories about the many issues that arise as the participants in the reunion move forward and decide if they want to build a relationship and with whom. Often there are only two players at the initial reunion. This changes rapidly as spouses, parents, siblings and offspring become involved or the decision must be made to tell some or all of these people. The issue of who knows about the reunion can be a big stumbling block to moving forward in a relationship. If the adoptive parents, the birthmother's husband or their children do not know about the reunion, then the secrets of not knowing are replaced by new secrets. This can put immeasurable stress on the people involved in the reunion who wish to move forward and build a relationship

After the first few meetings between the adoptee and birth parent, one of the first issues to ponder is "do we want to go beyond the reunion and develop a relationship?" The second question is, "what would we like this relationship to look like for each of us as time passes?" Often both parties are not moving at the same pace at the same time and one must wait for the other to decide how he or she wants to move forward. This can lead to insecurity, fear of being abandoned again or pulling away. Open, continuous communication is extremely important for both parties so as to avoid misunderstandings, which can happen very easily. Use of a knowledgeable therapist or post adoption support group can help both parties immeasurably during the beginning months of the new relationship.



The process of building relationships involves the process of integrating new information and new related strangers. It involves figuring out who each party to the reunion is to each other. An adult adoptee must figure out. Is to be in their life, is she to be a mother figure, a special friend or just an acquaintance. Often adult adoptees are heard to say about their birthmother, “She isn’t my mother, I have a mother” but then the question is “who is she?” These questions must be addressed by the birthmother and birthfather as well. What relation is the adult adoptee to their family?

One question that often arises for many adoptees in post-reunion is the issue of what might have been. The adult adoptee and birth parent often ponder who they might have been and how their lives might have been different had the adoption not occurred. The “what ifs” can be fun, distressing, scary and sometimes helpful. The question of why the adoption occurred at all often affects the stability and durability of a continuing relationship. Many adult adoptees experience anger, not from their lack of intellectual understanding of why they were relinquished but from an inability to emotionally accept that their birth parents gave them away. They feel abandoned and no explanation seems to sooth the anger or the hurt. This anger can often put relationship-building on hold for months and sometimes years.

The integration process has no road map and the time frames vary for each reunion. Some professionals say a new-found relationship between birth families and adult adoptees does not normalize for approximately seven years.
(Joyce Maguire Pavao)

Research and experience have shown that shared values, similar backgrounds and emotional stability of the two parties involved in a reunion are significant factors in building a successful relationship. The more similar the two parties are to one another, the more they are able to navigate the many issues that arise and come out the other side with a relationship intact. It cannot be suggested strongly enough the importance of ongoing support for all parties to the building

of a relationship post-reunion. All the same supports discussed in Chapter Seven of this booklet apply to the post reunion process.

“There’s no such thing as an easy post-reunion, because too many people are involved, each with its own personality, history, conflicts and uncertainties. Having a reunion and building a post-reunion is like erecting the Tower of Babel: a precarious balance must be achieved in a scene of noise and confusion, a discordant mixture of needs, desires and personal styles.” Gediman and Brown, BIRTBOND, pg.243.

IV. HOW TO SEARCH IN NEW JERSEY

Adoption Laws in the State of New Jersey require all adoption records to be sealed by the court at the time an adoption is finalized. The seal can only be broken by the courts for “good cause shown.” Due to this law, agencies and adoption attorneys may only release non-identifying information to adult adoptees upon their request. (Non-identifying information may include all medical history given at the time of relinquishment, as well as social, religious and ethnic background information in the record and the circumstances leading to the adoption. The above mentioned information is usually as old as the adopted person unless the birth parent has returned to the agency or law firm to update his or her file.)

The laws regarding releasing of non-identifying information apply to others that may be searching for adult adoptees. Others that are searching include birth family members and adoptive parents. In practice it has been shown that some adoptive parents hold identifying information about birth family members that may help their adult child in their search. So the first place an adult adoptee can go is to his or her adoptive family to see what information they can provide. The adoptive parents usually have a copy of the judgment of adoption papers, which sometimes have the birthmother’s name printed. Adoptees can request a copy of the judgment of adoption papers from the court where the adoption was finalized if the adoptive parents do not have it. Many people who have some identifying information use the Internet, support groups or private detectives to complete their searches.

In the State of New Jersey, the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) has a complete list of all agencies in the state that provide search and reunion services. The list gives the contact person for the program, the services offered and the fee required for the services. Agencies are required by state statute to keep records for 99 years.

If little or no information is available to the searcher the second important question for the searcher to explore is where the adoption took place. Was the

adoption handled privately by an attorney, through the public agency (DYFS), a private agency, or a private agency that has closed. DYFS can help the searcher with this question if the searcher does not have the name of the agency that handled his or her adoption. If the agency has closed, DYFS will usually be able to direct the searcher to an agency that inherited the records. The telephone number for DYFS is 609-292-8816.

If an adult was adopted through DYFS, there is a registry that can be called and the DYFS will do a search on his or her behalf for their birth parents. DYFS will not search on behalf of birth family members for the child they relinquished. If the adult was adopted through a private agency, the adoptee must call the agency and follow the agency's protocol and pay the required fee. Some private agencies do searches on behalf of birth family members looking for an adopted relative, but some do not. If the adoption was private, members of the adoption constellation can return to the attorney and seek help. Practice has shown that attorneys do not usually keep records for a long time and therefore they may not be able to provide any information.

It is encouraged in all circumstances that searchers avail themselves of existing support systems:

- New Jersey Adoption Resource Clearing House (NJ•ARCH) has an online chat room on search and reunion.
- There are many New Jersey adoption support groups that offer support to the entire search and reunion community. See Chapter 7 of this booklet: Support Groups and Conferences.
- New Jersey Social Workers and Psychologists who specialize in adoption issues can offer important help and support (NJARCH and Concerned Persons for Adoption have lists of professionals in NJ).
- Jean Strauss's book, Birthright, has excellent "Rules for Searching" page 37, "Questions for Searchers" page 35, and "Questions Post Reunion" page 338. The recommended reading in Chapter 8 of this booklet has a list of books that can be of help to all involved in search and reunion.

“There is no bible that can tell you exactly what’s going to happen or what you should do. Each individual’s situation is unique. A search is a journey into the unknown. The only ‘known’ that you have the ability to control is yourself. The more you examine your own feelings, the more awareness you’ll have of what you think you might find, the more prepared you will be both to undertake your search and to handle a reunion.” Jean Strauss, Birthright, page 36.

VII. INTERNATIONAL SEARCH

With the growing number of children adopted from abroad in the United States, support systems have begun to develop to assist those adopted persons with the search process. The countries that have been sources for the longest time have the most developed search systems. Record keeping varies from country to country.

Adoptive Families Magazine published the following information about search in specific countries in their January/February 2005 issue:

“South Korea: Search for birth family in South Korea is relatively active and well-organized. Legally, Korean agencies handling international adoptions can release identifying information if they have it. Generally, Koreans are supportive of search because genetic lineage is important in the culture. Birthmothers are contacting agencies in increasing numbers, seeking information about their now-adult children.

“China: Most of the children come into care through abandonment, so there is little information about birthparents and few birth relatives have come forward seeking information about their children. Currently, the China Center of Adoption Affairs (CCAA) mandates strict confidentiality about adoptions but, as first-generation Chinese adoptees become adults, China adoption experts believe that search will become more common, following the trend in South Korea.

“Russia: Russian law mandates that, during the process, adopting families receive all available information about the birthparents. After the adoption, however, birth-family information is held in confidentiality and, as such, Russian officials will not formally assist with searches. Russian adoptive parents typically do not tell children of their adoption, and many feign pregnancy when they are adopting.

“Guatemala: The law is silent concerning the release of birthparent identifying information. In practice, however, adopting families typically receive a great deal of information, including the birthmother’s name, address, city of origin, and work card number, which can be used to trace her in the future. Adoptive families who are contemplating a search should be aware that many adoption plans continue to be made in secrecy. Accordingly, birthmothers’ privacy must be respected.”

Persons adopted from abroad can contact the United States placing agency for advice and information. Some agencies will contact the host country agency on an adoptee’s behalf to start the search process.

VIII. SUPPORT GROUPS AND CONFERENCES*

The following are support groups in New Jersey for adopted persons, birth parents, and adoptive parents:

1. Chosen Children's Charities, Inc. provides financial support to searchers in need. Contact Paytra Skelly or Mary Lou Donkersloot at ccc4paytra@aol.com.
2. Morristown Post Adoption Support Group deals primarily with issues of search and reunion. Contact Jane Nast at JaneNast@compuserve.com or Judy Foster at jfoster7@optonline.net. Meetings are held on the first Saturday of each month from 1pm-5pm at The Presbyterian Church Parish House at 65 South Street in Morristown.
3. NJCARE (NJ Coalition for Adoption & Education deals with NJ Adoption Legislation and Adoption Education. Contact Pam Hasegawa at pamgawa@optonline.net or Jane Nast at JaneNast@compuserve.com. Activities of this group include writing legislation, testifying, speaking to groups and conference.
4. Adoption Crossroads deals with post-adoption issues and search and reunion. Contact Betty Allen Betglori@aol.com. The group meets on the second Wednesday of every month from 7:30-9:30 p.m. at the Church of Latter Day Saints on Doremus Ave. & Lenox St. in Ridgewood, NJ.
5. Adoption Support Group of New Jersey deals with search and reunion. Contact Maria Caliva-Picknally at Maria24@earthlink.net. The group meets the first Tuesday of every month from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the New Camden County Library, Westmont Division, MacArthur Blvd., Westmont, NJ.

6. CHATS (Connected Hearts Adoption Triad Support) is a support group and educational group. Contact Alyce Jenkins at alycemj@aol.com. The group meets the fourth Monday from 7:15-9:15 p.m. (except December) at the Watchung Avenue Presbyterian Church, 170 Watchung Ave. in North Plainfield, NJ.

* This information was correct as of the time of this publication. For the most current contact information, please contact NJ ARCH at 877-4 ARCHNJ.

1. St. John's University in New York has an adoption conference in the fall every two years. Visit their website at <http://new.stjohns.edu/>
2. Concerned Persons for Adoption has a yearly "Let's Talk Adoption" Conference the first Saturday of November at Rutgers University in Piscataway, NJ. Check their web site at www.cpfan.org.

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