OVERVIEW OF THE DOMESTIC ADOPTION PROGRAM

Lifeline provides comprehensive adoption services, domestically and internationally. These services include but are not limited to: counseling of expectant parents, home study services for prospective adoptive couples, post placement services, and reports to the court. In the past ten years, the face of domestic adoption has changed dramatically. Adoptions are not done today as they were when Lifeline had its first adoption in 1981. The role of the expectant parents, the social and spiritual climate, legal issues, and health issues have changed how adoptions take place as well as the services offered to the expectant parents and the prospective adoptive parents.

Our Mission

Lifeline’s domestic adoption ministry desires to partner with prospective adopting families who are called to not only adopt and raise a child in a Christ centered home, but also to share the hope found in Christ with the birthparents of their child. Lifeline is firmly committed to discipling, encouraging, and supporting couples through the adoption process by equipping, educating, and walking beside them every step of the way.

Our Values

**Gospel Centered** In all things, we seek to make Christ known and bring Him glory. We believe the Lord has given us this ministry as a means of making him known. We want to partner with prospective adoptive families who have been transformed by Christ and want to share this hope with others.

**Excellence Driven** One way we bring God glory, is by serving expecting parents and adoptive parents with excellence. We want to go beyond just helping a woman make an adoption plan or just helping a prospective couple add to their family. We want each individual in this process to feel valued and feel confident in the services they are receiving. One of the ways we serve with excellence is by ensuring that both the expecting parents and the prospective adoptive parents have their own advocate who holds their hand along every step of the process.

**Birthparent Reconciliation and Redemption** We deeply desire for women to know that their worth is not in how they see themselves or how the world sees them. We believe we have been called to the ministry of reconciliation as described in 2 Corinthians 5 and
that as people who have been forgiven, we desire for men and women in unexpected pregnancies to know they can have unconditional love and forgiveness from Christ.

**Holistic Care for Adopting Parents** We provide comprehensive education for families walking through the adoption journey. Our social workers seek to not just know the prospective families as adopting parents, but to know them holistically. This can be a difficult journey filled with many unknowns and heart aches. Therefore, Lifeline is committed to discipling, equipping, encouraging, and supporting our prospective adoptive parents as they go through their adoption journey. This is accomplished through the home study process, education, and support during the waiting, matching, and post placement phases of the journey.

**Holistic Care for Expecting Parents** We desire to get to know our expecting parents for more than just their unexpected pregnancy. We want to know their goals, their hopes, their fears and their struggles. By getting to know them holistically, we can empower them to make a choice that is best for them and their unborn child. We do this through 24/7 support, options counseling, connecting women to tangible resources, and post placement support.

**Discipleship Focused** The adoption journey can be one filled with challenges, disappointments, and celebrations. As we partner with prospective adoptive couples to raise a child in a Christian home and to minister to their child’s birth family, we desire to disciple them through that process. We desire to pray with our families, remind them of truths in God’s Word, and remind them of the bigger picture God is designing along the way. We desire to bear the burdens and rejoice in the victories of our expecting parents and our prospective adoptive couples as described in Galatians 6:2 and Romans 12:15.
The History of Openness in Domestic Adoption

Prior to 1980, most adoptions were “closed.” That is, the identities of the birth parents and the prospective adoptive parents were usually kept confidential from one another. In fact, many birth parents were given little information about their children, sometimes not even knowing the sex of the child they had or whether or not the child had been placed for adoption. In the 1980’s, however, this orientation towards closed information began to change.

As fewer women who faced a crisis pregnancy considered adoption a viable alternative, many adoption agencies began to include the birth mother in the decision making process. Confidentiality remained the norm, but allowing her participation in the process became a common practice. Helping choose the family that would adopt her child seemed to benefit the mother, giving her more peace following the adoption. Updates on the child also seemed to help the birth mother be more confident in her decision and would reassure her in the months following the placement that a right decision had been made.

In the last few years, requests from birth mothers to meet the adopting family have increased. Some birth mothers are asking for more contact and updates concerning the child in the months and years following the adoption. There is a broad range of openness possibilities. Openness might include meeting the birth mother without confidentiality being broken, or agreeing to an ongoing relationship between the adoptive parents and the birth mother.

Lifeline’s Pregnancy Counseling Ministry

Lifeline is an expectant parent centered agency. When a woman facing an unplanned pregnancy contacts us, we strive to do everything that we can to meet her spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. Ultimately, our goal is for every expectant parent to hear about the transforming love of Jesus and experience that love first hand through our staff and our adoptive families. Lifeline ministers to each of our expectant families holistically and does not coerce them into making an adoption plan. We want expectant parents to compare and contrast what their lives will look like if they parent or if they make an adoption plan. Just as each expectant parent is a unique individual, the specific needs for services vary as well. Lifeline provides free professional counseling regarding an adoption plan, and can also help set up proper medical care, provide transportation to appointments, assist in finding shelter, work through budgeting and

(205) 967-0811  
www.lifelinechild.org
other life skills, and connect expectant parents with independent legal counsel if needed. We understand the benefit of community and know it is important to empower expectant parents in making community connections with a local church and available resources. We provide services for both expectant mothers and fathers.

Most of the women Lifeline works with are considering placing their unborn child; however sometimes we have women considering placing their older child. There is not a typical expectant parent. They come from all races, socio economic status, age, social history, etc. However, many times there is history of other difficult circumstances in their life such as mental health history, substance abuse, unstable relationships and support systems and other social factors. This is an incredible opportunity for a prospective adoptive couple to minister to this expectant parent while understanding that the child to be placed in their home may have prenatal trauma from substance use or stressful pregnancy.

Lifeline has minimum contact and correspondence requirements for every adoptive couple. We ask that couples be willing to meet the expectant parent before placement and that couples send letters and pictures through Lifeline for the first thirteen years of the child’s life. While these are our minimum requirements, many birth mothers desire even more openness. One family may be willing to share only first names, while another family may be willing to go through labor and delivery with the birth mother. The more flexible a prospective adoptive family is, the more possibilities there are for placements.
Qualifications for Adoptive Families

Parenting Ability:
The adoptive parents (APs) must give evidence of a mutual desire and love for children. They must be able to provide for the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs of the child being adopted. APs should have the ability and desire to minister to their child's birth family.

Health:
Applicants must be in good physical and mental health as determined by a doctor's examination. They must be able to physically and emotionally undertake the responsibility of parenthood. They must pass the medical examination required by the sending and receiving state of their placement.

Age:
The applicants should not be more than 50 years older than the adopted child.

Financial Stability:
The applicants must have sufficient income to meet any expenses incurred by adding another family member. They must also be able to make reasonable provision for future financial stability. Medical insurance coverage is required.

Housing:
The applicants’ home must provide adequate space and living conditions necessary to promote the health and well-being of the family members. Ownership is not required.

Working Parents:
If both parents work outside the home, one of the parents should be able to remain at home with the child for a reasonable amount of time following the placement. (The exact length of time can be discussed with a social worker at the time of the home study. A general rule we suggest is that one parent takes six to eight weeks, usually the allotted amount of maternity leave provided by most companies. FMLA standards require adoptive parents the same amount of leave.) This is to provide for the nurturing and security of the child, while he/she assimilates into the home. When the parent returns to work, there must be a plan for responsible child care so that the security of the child can be sustained.
**Prior History of Felony Convictions:**
Criminal background checks will be conducted for each adult member of the family. Any criminal history in your past should be addressed with your social worker prior to moving forward. All prior legal convictions should be disclosed with the agency representative before starting your home study.

**Marriage:**
A husband and wife should be married at least three years prior to filing an application. APs should show evidence of health and stability in their marriage.

**Domestic Training:**
Have sufficient training/education to meet the needs of the child and ministry to the birth family. Attend Lifeline’s Domestic Mini Conference in Birmingham, AL.

**Birth Family Ministry:**
Lifeline desires to work with families who see this adoption as not only a ministry to the child, but also an opportunity to minister to the birth family and therefore willingly desire a relationship with the birth family. At a minimum we require AP’s to send letters and pictures: 1st year- 4 times; every 6 months up to child’s 5th birthday; and annually from ages 5-13. Once a child is 13, it becomes the decision of the child/family if they feel comfortable continuing correspondence. We also require that AP’s be willing to meet the birthparent(s) at their request prior to placement

**Faith:**
We ask families to affirm to our Statement of Faith
Domestic Adoption Process

Each applicant for adoption will be assigned a social worker, which will coordinate services for each family on an individual basis. The greatest effort spent on each couple will be the home study.

Home Study:
A home study is a series of interviews in which the social worker concentrates on collecting information via face-to-face contact with each couple. The home study typically consists of an orientation interview followed by 4 home study interviews.

1. The first interview is a home visit in which the social worker will address each of the qualifications for adoption. This is a joint interview.

2. The next visits are individual interviews and are typically held at the LCS office. Both spouses may come on the same day, if they must travel to get to the office. If they are local, each spouse may schedule his or her own interview at his convenience. The interviews will be autobiographical in nature and will be based on an Autobiography written by the applicant. The social worker will ask that you complete this Autobiography prior to this interview.

3. The third interview will focus on parenting philosophies and plans. Issues such as experience and exposure to children, the applicants’ parenting received when they were children, values and discipline will be explored.

4. The fourth interview will focus on adoption education. We will discuss how to educate the child on his or her adoptive status, how to educate others, proper words and timing, books on adoption, transracial adoptions, contact with birth parents, background information on any prospective adopted child, completing a profile and many other issues common to adoption.

Education is a very important part of the home study process. Each family in the domestic program is required to attend Lifeline’s domestic adoption conference in Birmingham, Alabama. This conference is a two-day interactive training, which will prepare and equip families for the joys and challenges of domestic adoption.
Matching, Placement and Post Placement Services Profile

Prospective adoptive couples will create a profile book to help expectant parents learn more about their family and what her child’s life would be like if adopted by them. Family profiles who meet the expectant parents’ desires are shown to expectant parent(s) once permission has been granted by the adoptive family. Families are encouraged to wait to develop their profile until after they have attended the domestic conference and completed most of the home study process.

Matching
Lifeline uses a mutual selection process for matching. In most cases, expectant parents choose the adoptive couple for their child. However, the prospective adoptive couples have an opportunity to choose if they wish for their profile to be shown to the expectant parent.

The Pregnancy Counselor does her best to gather as much information as possible regarding each expectant parent’s medical and social history. This information is provided to the adoptive parents in the form of a non-identifying information summary with the understanding that there are no guarantees in regards to knowing the full mental, emotional, or physical health history of any birth family. This information summary also includes the expectant parents desires for pre and post adoption correspondence and any other desires of the expectant parents. The prospective adoptive family has the option to decide if they would like their profile shown to the expectant parent based on the information provided. Typically, these information summaries are provided to adoptive families in the third trimester of the pregnancy.

Expectant parents review the profiles prepared by the prospective adoptive couples and choose a family for their child based on these profiles. There are times they may ask further questions or requests meetings with multiple families before deciding.

Lifeline cannot give families any time frame during which they may be selected nor guarantee you that your profile will be selected. Families should prepare emotionally for a 2-4 year wait time, yet prepare financially for a match immediately after home study approval.

When selected by an expectant parent, the prospective adoptive couple will often have the opportunity to meet with the expectant parent prior to the birth of the child if desired.
by the expectant parent. This is often a time for each party to learn more about each other and talk further about expectations/boundaries.

**Placement**
There is often a period of time following a birth parent signing consents/relinquishments to an adoption in which they can withdraw their consent. This time period is typically dependent on the state in which the birth parent resides. During this time period, children will often be placed into interim care homes until the withdrawal time has expired. Exceptions can often be made when it is in the best interest of the child and mutually agreed upon by the birth parents, adoptive parents, and agency. In these cases, the adoptive parents will agree in writing to an “at risk” placement and the child can be placed in the prospective adoptive home from the hospital.

If a prospective family accepts placement of a child outside of their state of residence, the prospective couple must remain in the state in which the birth parent resides until they have received ICPC clearance. Lifeline will assist families with this process.

**Finalization**
Adoptive families will need an attorney to finalize their adoption. Lifeline encourages families to utilize the attorneys in each state in which we have a relationship. These attorneys are experts in adoption law and have often provided consultation to Lifeline on the case throughout our relationship with the birth parent. Attorneys will assist families in filing their adoption petition. These petitions will need to be filed as soon as possible after placement of the child, typically at least 30 days after placement of the child unless instructed otherwise by the attorney and/or extended by the court.

Before the adoption can be finalized, the prospective family will receive post placement visits, typically at least 2 prior to finalization, but dependent on each state’s minimum standards. These visits are a time for the family and their social worker to check in with each other. The social worker will provide further education to the family. Information from these post placement visits will be used for the final recommendation of Lifeline to the court through the court post placement report.
DOMESTIC ADOPTION FEES
Lifeline Program

TOTAL LIFELINE ADOPTION FEES: $27,500 ($26,200 for 2\textsuperscript{nd} adoption) plus annual update fees.

TERMS OF PAYMENT, paid directly to Lifeline Children’s Services, Inc.

- Application Fee (due with application): $300.00 (not applicable for 2\textsuperscript{nd} adoption)
- Home Study Payment 1 (due at orientation interview): $1000.00 ($500 for 2\textsuperscript{nd} adoption)
- Home Study Payment 2 (due at 3rd home study visit): $1000.00 ($500 for 2\textsuperscript{nd} adoption)
- Program Fee Payment 1 (due when Profile is submitted): $4,600.00
- Program Fee Payment 2 (due when matched with a birthmother): $4,600.00
- Placement Fee (due at placement): $16,000.00
- Annual Home Study Update Fee: $350.00 per update (as needed)

*None of the above fees are refundable. The 2\textsuperscript{nd} program fee is transferrable to another birthmother match if the match does not result in placement.

ADDITIONAL FEES:

In addition to Lifeline’s adoption fees, there are other fees that will be paid directly to each provider.

- State Police Clearance Letter: approx. $10.00 (varies by state)
- Criminal Background Check: approx. $50.00 per person (varies by state)
- Additional Background Check Fee: if matched with a birth mother in another state
- Medical Exam: made payable directly to health care provider
- Prepare/Enrich Relationship Assessment: $35.00 (per couple)
- Consultations: if additional consultations are needed, these fees are also payable directly to the provider.
- Domestic Mini-Conference Fee: $60.00 (per couple)
- Travel and Lodging Expenses: Domestic mini-conference in Alabama (if applicable)
- Home study Amendment Fee: $100.00 per amendment without visit (as needed)
- Home study Amendment Fee: $350.00 per amendment with visit (as needed)
- Home study Amendment Fee: $500.00 relocation to a new state (as needed)
- Travel and Lodging expenses: for ICPC (if applicable)
- Attorney’s Fee
- Court Costs
- Child’s Birth Certificates

Husband’s signature ___________________________ Wife’s signature ___________________________

Date: ___________________________
Explanation of Domestic Adoption Fees
Lifeline Program

AGENCY FEES:

- Application Fee: $300 (N/A for 2nd adoption) (due with application submission)
- 1st Home Study Fee: $1,000 ($500 for 2nd adoption) (due at orientation interview)
- 2nd Home Study Fee: $1,000 ($500 for 2nd adoption) (due at 3rd home study visit)
- Profile Fee: $4,600 (due at profile submission)
- Matching Fee: $4,600 (due when matched with a birthmother)
- Placement Fee: $16,000 (due at placement)
- Annual Update Fees: $350 annually (if applicable)

TOTAL: $27,500 ($26,200 for 2nd adoption) (this does not include attorney fees or annual updates)

Lifeline is a licensed, non-profit adoption ministry, dedicated to full-service help to both the adoptive couple and birth parents.

Lifeline is a licensed, non-profit adoption ministry, committed to excellence and integrity in everything we do. We charge our adoptive couples $27,500 however an adoption typically costs Lifeline over $40,000. We rely on fundraising and donors to cover the costs not covered by adoption fees.

Any couple experiencing significant financial difficulties should ask their social worker about filing an application to be reviewed setting forth the reasons for fee considerations. This should be done, reviewed and dealt with prior to selection for a particular placement. It is the couple’s responsibility to raise this issue early and get a resolution in writing. It is also required that the couple apply to Show Hope, ABBA Fund and Life Song for Orphans prior to requesting a fee reduction from Lifeline. It should be noted these and other grant resources require a copy of an approved home study. Therefore, the question of whether or not a fee reduction will be granted by Lifeline cannot be answered until the home study is complete and until grant resources respond to the request for funds. Please consult with your social worker about this process.

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initials              initials
Effective 1998, a federal adoption tax credit became available to reimburse adoption expenses. The adoption tax credit was made permanent in 2012. Please consult your CPA regarding the current status of the adoption tax credit and whether your family qualifies.

The $27,500 adoption fee is comprised of the following payments: A fee of $300 is submitted with the application to adopt. A home study fee of $2,000 is paid in two installments: $1,000 due at the orientation interview and $1,000 due at the last home study visit (for a second Lifeline adoption these fees are discounted to $500 each, for a total of $1,000 for the home study fee). There is an additional charge of $350 annually for home study updates. The first program fee is $4,600 and is due at profile submission. The second program fee is $4,600 and is due when matched with a birth mother. This fee is transferrable to another birth mother match if the placement does not take place. The placement fee of $16,000 is due at placement.

Lifeline minimizes upfront costs and allows most fees to be transferred to other birth mother matches until an adoption takes place. Lifeline couples are never financially involved in the cases that do not result in a placement.

Questions regarding fees or other policies can be addressed to your social worker.

**Domestic On-Hold Policy**

If special circumstances require a Client to temporarily suspend the adoption process, including, but not limited to pregnancy or financial difficulty, Lifeline will apply one hundred percent (100%) of Client’s previously paid agency fees to the reactivated adoption process, provided the adoption process is reactivated within two (2) years of the suspension. Client’s notice of temporary suspension and desire to go on-hold must be communicated to Lifeline in writing. After the expiration of two (2) years from the date of said notice, Client may not reactivate their adoption process. Subsequently, after the expiration of two (2) years, Client’s file will be closed and services automatically terminated.

If Client chooses to reactivate, notice of Client’s desire to reactive must be communicated to Lifeline in writing. Client will be assessed an administrative reactivation fee of $500.00, in addition to all remaining fees. If more than twelve (12) months have elapsed since the temporary suspension, Client will be required to comply with all fees at their current rates at the time the adoption process is reactivated. However, if a Client goes on hold for pregnancy, Client may reactivate pursuant to the fees on their original application. Families who go on hold due to pregnancy may reactivate once child is nine (9) months in order to update the home study. Profiles may not be shown until child is twelve (12) months old.

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**Domestic Refund Policy**

Each fee collected at specified intervals/sections during the adoption process is non-refundable once any service begins for that interval/section. Each fee for specified intervals/sections shall be due prior to work performed on that section. Client acknowledges that Lifeline is compensated for ongoing services and is not compensated based on whether or not a successful adoption is completed. Client understands and acknowledges that payments to Lifeline compensate Lifeline for work performed, including Lifeline time and resources, therefore all fees are non-refundable should AP not progress in the adoption process for any reason.

Should an adoption fail to finalize after matching due to legal challenges or impediments, Client’s matching fee may be transferrable to other birthmother matches.

We have read, understand and agree to the guidelines set forth above.

______________________________  ______________________________
Prospective Father Name (Print)  Prospective Mother Name (Print)

______________________________  ______________________________
Prospective Father Signature  Prospective Mother Signature

Date: __________________________  Date: __________________________