

Portfolios and “Dear Birthmother” Letters

We use scrapbooks, which we call portfolios, as a way for birthparents to learn about adoptive parents as they select parents for their children. A birthparent feels more secure in her plan when she knows information about the adoptive family she selects for her child. A portfolio gives the birthparent an opportunity to see the adoptive family and their way of life. We include your "Dear Birthmother" letters in your portfolio. We also include your *Adoptive Parent Profile for Birthparents* in the portfolio. Please do not use original photographs in the portfolio; color copies will be just fine. We encourage you to keep a copy of the portfolio. We will return the portfolio to you when you receive an adoptive placement. However, many families like to give the portfolio to the birthmother, and many like to keep one to share with the child as he or she grows and learns his or her adoption story.

Guidelines and Suggestions for Portfolios

Every family has a unique way of creating their portfolio. Be creative! You can include art work and poems to make your portfolio complete. If you desire, the scrapbook industry has a wealth of ways to make the portfolio distinctly yours. Keep in mind that the birthfather may be involved as well. Include pictures that give insight into your personalities, lifestyles, and values. Be careful not to identify your last name, or the town where you live. Suggestions for photographs to include are:

- Everyday home life
- Hobbies, interests, talents, special collections, vacations, pets
- Holidays
- Family and friends
- Church activities and other activities that involve children (remember, no identifying information)
- Your house, yard, and the nursery, even if it has not been made into a nursery yet (No mailbox or door showing your address, please)

Include captions on the pages, as though she is sitting next to you, and you are telling her about each page. Because we travel to the birthmother's location to show her portfolios, we ask that your portfolio be no thicker than one inch, and the pages be no larger than 8 ½ by 11 inches.

Guidelines and Suggestions for “Dear Birthmother” Letters

Address the letter with "Dear Birthmother," yet keep in mind that the birthfather may be reading also. Feel free to express your love and concern for the birthmother. Communicate genuinely to the birthparents about your personality, lifestyle, and parenting philosophy. You may mention your infertility in a positive light, perhaps sharing something good that came out of this experience. Many couples will have two letters, one from the husband and one from the wife.

You may want to describe each other. Tell the birthmother about your spouse and why you fell in love with him/her. Many birthmothers choose to work with our agency because they want a Christian couple to raise their child (even if they are not Christians), therefore you may choose to write about how your faith in the Lord is incorporated into your lives.

Share how a child will fit into your family, and about how much your parents and other family members are looking forward to a new addition. Share if the child will be the first grandchild. If you already have children, share about what it will mean to have another addition to the family. Share aspects of your life that can help the birthparents see what kind of life their child will have, and to see you as the solution they are seeking. Finally, sign your letters with your first names.