Adoption Attorney Worksheet

Deciding on an adoption professional can be an organizational challenge. Copy this sheet (or print it out at **www.theadoptionguide.com/files/AttorneyQuestions.pdf**) and then fill one out for each attorney you interview. For a statement of philosophy from each attorney listed in this *Guide*, see **www.theadoptionguide.com/process/finding-an-attorney**.

Attorney name _____

Finances

- What is the average cost of the adoptions you have handled?
- Do you bill by the hour or charge a flat fee?
- Do you require a retainer fee? If so, how much? What happens to my retainer if the adoption is not completed?

Legal Fee Structure and Estimates

Hourly rate: _____

Retainer: _____

Average fees for uncontested intrastate domestic adoption: _____

Average fees for interstate compact legal process: _____

Qualifications

- How long have you handled adoptions?
- How many nonrelative adoptions have you completed? How many this year? What percentage of your total practice is devoted to adoption?
- What services do you provide? Will you actively assist me in finding an adoption situation (if allowed by state law), as well as handle the legal paperwork? Can you recommend an adoption counselor to guide me and/or the birthparents through the process?

Working Relationships

- What is your general philosophy of adoption? Why did you get involved in it?
- Do you handle open adoptions, confidential adoptions, or both? What are your feelings about openness?
- Do you see counseling for birthparents as helpful? Why or why not?
- Will you accept collect calls from birthparents? Do you have a toll-free number?
- Are you available after hours? When you are unavailable, is another knowledgeable attorney available?
- Will you provide references for me to consult?

Things to Think About

- Does the lawyer answer your questions to your satisfaction?
- Does the lawyer return your phone calls promptly?
- Is the lawyer sensitive to your feelings?
- Is the lawyer organized?
- Does the lawyer pressure you or make you feel uncomfortable with the decision-making process?
- Does the lawyer openly discuss the financial and emotional risks involved?
- Do the lawyer and support staff make you feel at ease, and will they assist the birthparents graciously?

Adapted from attorneys Diane Michelsen and the late Amy M. Silberberg.

Notes: