



Christian Adoption Services FAQs about Initiating an Adoption Search in North Dakota

Search and reunion will have a significant impact on your life, as well as on the lives of many others. Questions, and a wide range of emotions – excitement, anxiety, fear and impatience to name a few- are normal and to be expected.

Who may initiate an adoption search?

Christian Adoption Services can provide assistance to adopted adults, birth parents, and genetic siblings of an adopted individual whose adoptions were facilitated through our agency. **Adopted individuals can request a search when they reach 18, and birth parents or birth siblings may request a search when the adopted individual reaches 21.** Our staff is available to help you sort through your questions and to work with you through each step of the process. Contact Christian Adoption Services at 701-237-4473 or Destrie@CASfamily.org for further information or to set up an appointment to talk about your request.

Can I search for both of my birth parents?

We can always conduct a search for your birth mother. We only conduct a search for a birth father if there is evidence which corroborates an allegation of paternity (NDCC 14-15-16 & NDAC 75-03-13). We can check the file to let you know if this is an option. Both birth parents must consent to a search for the other party.

What happens if my birth parent does not want any contact with me, or if the search reveals that (s)he is deceased?

If your birth parent initially does not desire contact, we would encourage her/him to think about it further and we would attempt to provide support/resources to the birth parent. If a firm decision for no contact is made, we would attempt to gather updated health history from your birth parent and provide that information to you, along with any other information your birth parent may provide. If your birth parent is deceased, we would attempt to contact a close relative if you desire contact with a relative.

I have a health problem and I am wondering how to get updated health information from my birth family?

We can check the file for any health history, which had previously been recorded. We can also search for your birth parent, as mentioned above. We request that your physician provide us with a list of specific medical questions as well as a statement as to the medical urgency of the request. Requests deemed urgent **by your physician** are given priority.

How do I get a copy of my original birth certificate?

If you were born in North Dakota, you must petition a court to order the North Dakota Department of Health's Division of Vital Records to release the original birth certificate.

I am not sure which agency handled my adoption or the placement of my child, what do I do?

You should contact the North Dakota Department of Human Services' Adoption Service Unit.

How does CAS search and how do you contact my birth parents (or son/daughter)?

We utilize many different computer databases, as well as public records and other resources such as newspapers, historical societies, vital records, etc. We attempt to reach the person directly if possible. We contact a family member only if it becomes necessary, and we do not violate any confidentiality in this process. When we locate the person for whom we are searching, we contact him/her by phone. We present your request for contact and offer much support throughout that phone call.

If my birth parent (or son/daughter) refuses to have contact with me, or cannot be found, will my search fee be refunded to me?

No, the fee is not refunded, as it covers the costs of conducting the search, but is not contingent upon the outcome.

If my birth parent (or son/daughter) wants contact with me, what are my options?

Some of this depends upon what information you have decided to release to this person on your Release of Information form included in the search packet. The other party will also make decisions regarding preferences for contact. CAS staff is able to facilitate contact if needed, by forwarding letters, and/or helping to arrange phone calls, meetings, etc. for those who are not yet in direct contact with one another.

I would like to search for my siblings, is this possible?

Yes, when we are acting on the request of an adopted individual to disclose identifying information about a genetic sibling, or acting on the request of a genetic sibling to disclose identifying information about an adopted individual, we must determine if either individual knows the identity of a living mutual genetic parent. If either individual knows the identity of a living mutual genetic parent, no disclosure may be made unless that parent is first notified.

What can I find out?

Non-identifying Information

This is a written summary that provides information about the birth family of an adopted adult that was contained in the agency file at the time the adoptive placement was made. It includes physical descriptions, education, interests, and other non-identifying information. The fee for this service is \$35 per hour.

Identifying Information/Search

If you want updated medical information, or if you want contact with your birth family/adopted adult, you can request that the agency search for the birth family member/adopted adult to see if they are willing to provide information and/or are open to contact with you. If they agree, you and your birth relative can choose to correspond through the agency or you may agree to exchange names, addresses and phone numbers and correspond directly with each other. An agency representative is available to help you consider which kind of contact is best for you and to assist in facilitating a first meeting. The fee for this service is \$35 per hour.

*****When returning all required forms to CAS, a payment of 3 hours of work (\$105) must be submitted.***

The remainder of the fees shall be paid in full prior to receiving a non-identifying report, updated medical information, and/or contacting the subject of the Search. The 3 hours that are initially paid will be considered prior to receiving a final bill.**

What do I do first?

It is important to consider in advance how initiating a search will affect you and others.

Some questions for consideration are:

- Why do I want to search at this time?

- What do I hope to find?
- Will I be able to accept disappointment if my expectations are not met?
- Am I open to the changes/challenges that I might encounter?
- Am I willing to consider that my birth relative's expectations may be different than mine?
- Do I have a supportive person or support system to help me process my feelings?

While there is no guarantee what the outcome of your search will be, thoughtful preparation will help you create realistic expectations and a positive experience, even if the result is different than what you expected. There are many excellent books and on-line resources available to assist you in preparing to search. Many of these resources recommend recording information, thoughts and feelings about the process in a journal.

How do I start a search?

The State of North Dakota requires that you complete two forms in order to begin the search process. They are "Release of Information--Search/Disclosure" and "Search/Disclosure Request" forms. **These forms are available from our agency or from the North Dakota Department of Human Services Office in Bismarck.**
<http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/adoption/disclosure.html>

If you request non-identifying information, you will usually receive a response within a month. If you request information that requires a search, we have a minimum of 90 days to make a complete and reasonable effort to locate your birth relative. The outcome and length of time varies with each search.

If your birth relative is located, he/she will be informed that he/she may either consent or deny disclosure of identifying information. If your birth relative consents, our agency will work with both parties to help you consider what type of contact you desire. If your birth relative denies disclosure, we will not be able to provide you with any identifying information.

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