



## **Adoption Records Handbook: Birth Family Searches Made Easier with Self-Help Tips, Registries, Search Angels, Pro Se Legal Forms, etc.**

**Teresa Brown**

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It is estimated that one in ten Americans is adopted. At various points in their lives, these adoptees may decide to try to find information about their birth families, but the road to reunion is rough. Many adoption records are sealed, and it can be difficult to gain access to them. Even if records are obtained, birth families may have moved and birth mothers may have new married names. Deciding how to begin the search can be an overwhelming task in itself.

As a search tool, this handbook is indispensable. Brown has experience on all sides of the adoption triad: her parents adopted her sister, and she herself is a “first mother” now reunited with her child. She is also a retired paralegal, giving her the background needed to help families navigate the legal hurdles involved in a search.

Written in a straightforward manner, Brown's book is meant to help members of the adoption triad get the job done as inexpensively as possible. She gives step-by-step instructions for requesting an original birth certificate, including templates for the documents needed to file a Court Petition if normal channels do not work. Once a birth certificate is obtained, the information given on it is the basis for a search.

There are many avenues open to searchers for gaining information. Brown addresses how to approach obvious channels, like the adoption agency or attorney who facilitated the adoption, as well as more obscure options, such as home security alarm registrations and pet licenses. Some are surprisingly simple; for example, one woman found her birth siblings by placing classified ads in the newspaper. Also included are tips for removing black marker from documents, advice on choosing a reputable private investigator, and a myriad of resource listings.

The search for a birth family can be daunting, but Brown believes that no one should be denied the right to his birth information because it may inconvenience someone else. As she says, “Whether good or bad, let them find their answers.”

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (October 13, 2008)

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