



Finding Family Spokespeople

When you approach a family, convey your appreciation of their willingness to speak with you. Also, make sure that they are comfortable with taking your call at home or work. If necessary, discuss a better time to talk. **Remember—the issue is personal, so sensitivity is of the utmost importance.**

Before you start asking the family about their adoption experiences, find out whether they are comfortable sharing their story with the media. Assure them that any media request would go through you first, and that you would handle the arrangements. Also, let them know that you would be sure to get them copies of whatever runs.

The following list of questions can be used as a guide for your conversations with potential families. You will find that it is not necessary to ask every question on the list. As the conversation unfolds, you should pick and choose the appropriate follow-up questions until you have a clear sense of the family's story.

For a family adopting for the first time:

Q: Please tell me about your family. (This is a good way to start the conversation. Try to obtain pertinent facts about the family at the beginning of the conversation, including the number of children; **their names and ages**; how long the child or children have been in the family's care as foster children; both parents' occupations; and where the family lives).

Q: Please tell me about your experiences before you decided to adopt a child.

- Did you already have children? Why did you choose to provide foster care and/or adopt a child?
- What was life like before you decided to adopt? Were you foster parents?
- How was life different before you started the foster care/adoption process?

Q: Tell me what it was like trying to adopt a child.

- Describe the moment you decided to adopt a child.
- Did you think you would be able to adopt?
- Why did you decide to adopt a foster child?
- Was it difficult to start the adoption process?
- Did you have help from government or advocacy groups during the process?
- Did you have fears/concerns? Were you concerned about the financial burden? Were you concerned about behavioral problems?

Q: Will you be adopting your child/children in conjunction with a National Adoption Day 2008 event in your community?

Q: Have you considered adopting or becoming a foster parent again?

Q: What advice would you give to a family that is considering adoption?



For a family that has adopted before:

Q: Please tell me about your family. (This is a good way to start the conversation. Try to obtain pertinent facts about the family at the beginning of the conversation, including number of children; **their names and ages**; how long the child or children have been in the family's care—as foster children or adopted children; both parents' occupations; and where the family lives).

Q: Tell me what it was like trying to adopt a child.

- Describe the moment you decided to adopt a child.
- Did you think you would be able to adopt?
- Why did you decide to adopt a foster child?
- Was it difficult to start the adoption process?
- Did you receive help throughout the process? If so, from whom?
- Did you have fears/concerns? Were you concerned about the financial burden? Were you concerned about behavioral problems? How old was the child when you adopted?

Q: Did you adopt as part of a previous National Adoption Day celebration?

- Tell me about your experiences that day.
- What types of activities were held in your community?
- Were you aware of the celebrations going on across the country at the time?
- Would you recommend to other adoptive parents to get involved with National Adoption Day this year or perhaps in the future?
- Do you have any pictures or memorabilia from a previous National Adoption Day that you would like to share?

Q: Tell me how your life has changed now that you have adopted a child?

- Describe the day you adopted your child.
- How was life after the adoption process? Did you have help from government or advocacy groups?
- Was there much of a financial burden? How has the child adjusted?

Q: Have you considered adopting or becoming a foster parent again?

Q: What advice would you give to a family that is considering adoption?

Additional questions for a family that has adopted before and is currently adopting again:

Q: Why did you decide to adopt another child into your family?

- How did your children react to the idea of having a new sibling?
- How has this adoption process compared with your adoptions in the past?

Q: Will you be adopting your child/children in conjunction with a National Adoption Day 2009 event in your community?

How to decide whether this is the right family for media outreach or to invite to speak at an event:

Is their story strong and motivating? Are there any negative aspects to their story that could come out if questioned? Are the parent(s) articulate? If you are not certain about whether to use the family, explain to them that you are speaking with several families, and that you will get back to them after you have spoken with the others. Make your decision promptly and call them back as soon as possible.

Once you have decided on a good family to feature, explain to them what media coverage or the event would entail and how they would fit in. Do not promise them that they will be interviewed by a reporter or speak at an event; rather, explain to them that you are looking for several family stories to offer to the media or attend an event. Ask if they would be comfortable telling their story to a reporter or in public should they be selected. Not all families are comfortable sharing their stories, so it's a good idea to establish communication with more than one family.



If the family you are speaking with is willing to tell their story as a part of the news conference, you will want to ask a few follow-up questions in your second call to them:

- Can they come to the news conference with their family (spouse and/or children)?
- Can they bring photos of their family?

You may want to consider compensating a family for their time, especially if attending the news conference will involve missing work, and should compensate them for transportation to the event or parking fees, if appropriate. You also should explain that you or another coalition member will help prepare them for the event and will be at the event to help if needed.

Discussing a family's story can sometimes be difficult for you as well as the family because it can highlight concerns about the health and safety of their children. It can be a moving and inspiring experience for all—you, the family and other families watching and listening. It's important to prepare yourself for these feelings prior to making the call so that you can be sensitive to the family's emotions.