



## SOCIAL SERVICES NEWS

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**DATE: Dec. 20, 2016**

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### **CONFIDENTIAL INTERMEDIARY SERVICES MAY HELP ADULT ADOPTEES FIND THEIR BIRTH PARENTS**

HICKORY -- Many adults who were adopted as children want to find their birth parents. This search is often hampered by the fact that North Carolina adoption records are sealed by law, and may only be unsealed by a court order.

However, Catawba County Social Services, as well as several other agencies in the state, has a program that can help in some cases. It is called Confidential Intermediary. To apply, an adoptee must be over the age of 18 and must have been adopted through any North Carolina Department of Social Services. The service is also available to the biological parent of an adult adoptee, an adult biological sibling of an adult adoptee, an adult biological half-sibling of an adult adoptee, an adult family member of a deceased biological parent, an adoptive family member of a deceased adoptee.

There is a charge for this service, which helps to cover the staff time involved. An initial, non-refundable fee of \$350 is required for standard confidential intermediary services provided to Catawba County residents and to non-county residents whose adoption was connected in any way with Catawba County Social Services.

An initial fee of \$425 is required for standard confidential intermediary services provided to non-Catawba County residents whose adoptions were not connected to services of Catawba County Social Services.

Additional charges are: \$100 fee for the search of a family member not included in the standard services, and \$75 for a facilitated meeting between the applicant and searched-for party.

To start the process, the person requesting the service meets with a social worker, providing a picture ID along with proof of age and other appropriate documents of identity and relationships.

The social worker then is able to access the original adoption records, and use other search tools, to try to locate the biological relative. Not all searches are successful, but many are. Only if both parties agree is a meeting arranged.

The first meeting is facilitated by a social worker. It is usually very emotional. Some meetings result in warm family reunions that lead to a continued relationship between the adult adoptee and their biological family. At other times, the meeting may be difficult, but the parties may have the satisfaction of knowing the answers they were seeking, often for many years.

To find out more about Catawba County's Confidential Intermediary process, visit our website at <http://www.catawbacountync.gov/dss/FamilyBuilders/Adult.asp>, email Elaine Patterson at [epatterson@catawbacountync.gov](mailto:epatterson@catawbacountync.gov) or call Family Builders at 828-465-8901.

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