



BUCKNER[®]

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

When you adopt through Buckner, you not only receive assistance during the adoption process, but you also have access to a lifetime of support services. *See page 12 for frequently asked questions.*

For adoptive parents, we offer:

- De-identified copies of your child's adoption record.
- Search assistance to obtain medical information.
- Search assistance to open a closed adoption.
- Post-adoption counseling services.

See page 2 for more information.

For adoptees, we offer:

- De-identified copies of your adoption record.
- Listing in our Mutual Consent Adoption Registry.
- Search assistance in finding birth parents.
- Post-adoption counseling services.

See page 4 for more information.

For birth parents, we offer:

- Background history search for adopted children.
- Listing in our Mutual Consent Adoption Registry.
- Search assistance in finding birth children.
- Post-adoption counseling.
- Assistance in updating your birth child's file.

See page 8 for more information.

To request services, download and return the appropriate forms from the Post-Adoption Services section of our website:

- Adoptive Parent Service Request
- Adoptee Service Request
- Adoptee Registry Application
- Birth Parent Service Request
- Birth Parent Registry Application
- Updated History of Birthmother's Family
- Updated History of Birthfather's Family

Please send forms, identity verification and payment (checks payable to Buckner Children & Family Services) to:

Post-Adoption Department, Buckner Children and Family Services
5200 S. Buckner Blvd.
Dallas, TX 75227

Services for Adoptive Parents

De-identified copies of your child's adoption record

Fee: \$80.00

Texas state law allows adoptive parents and adult adoptees (18 and over) to obtain a copy of the adopted person's file which has been edited to protect the confidentiality of birth families. The amount of information in records varies, but usually includes information on the adopted person's birth, medical and social information regarding the birth families, and circumstances surrounding the adoption. If anyone from the birth family has been in contact with Buckner, subsequent to the relinquishment, that information will be included. If the file has been updated, all non-identifying updated information will be contained in the file copy as well.

Upon receipt of the File Request Form, copies of two forms of identification and the \$80.00 fee, the file will be retrieved from storage. The post-adoption counselor will de-identify the record and make a photocopy of it.

Records are prepared in the order requests are received. Because of the large number of requests and limited staff, please allow two to three months from the time of your request to the receipt of your file.

Post-adoption Counseling

Fee: \$75.00 per hour

Some adoptive parents may feel the need to counsel with a Buckner social worker for help in talking with their child about adoption, or for assistance in dealing with difficult issues in the child's background. Buckner provides time limited counseling related to these and other adoption issues. Occasionally adopted children may feel the need for counseling related to feelings of loss and/or abandonment. Adoptees may also feel the need for counseling during adolescence, to help them sort out their feelings about being adopted or to process issues related to their developing identity.

Search to Obtain Current Medical Information

You may request that Buckner Children and Family Services (Buckner) facilitate an active search for your child's birthmother if you are interested in opening communication with the birth family, or if you are seeking current medical information.

Search to Open a Closed Adoption.

Fee: \$375.00 *

Prior to facilitating a search, Buckner would require:

- One-hour post-adoption conference.
- Notarized Waiver of Confidentiality & Release of Liability (signed AFTER counseling and before contacting your child's birthmother).
- Update and non-identifying letter for your child's birthmother.

*Most searches can be completed for the flat fee of \$375.00. The fee covers the cost of actual record searches, private investigator's fees, and retrieval of public documents, such as marriage records, birth & death records, etc.

The flat fee covers the worker's time (which would include time spent on letters, record requests, and telephone contacts with the searcher as well as outside contacts) up to a total of 6 hours. Should the fee of \$375.00 be used up before a search is completed, the Buckner worker would contact the searching party to determine if they wish to pursue the search any further. Any continuance of the search would require a deposit of \$100.00, against which services could be drawn. The worker's time would then be billed at the rate of \$65.00 per hour.

Determination of Search:

Once contact has been made with the found party, the Buckner counselor will apprise the found party of the following options available to them:

- A direct exchange of identifying information by both parties, so that direct communication can occur. (This would require that the found party be willing to participate in the hour post-adoption conference and sign a Waiver of Confidentiality & Release of Liability, as was required of the searcher)
- Exchanges of non-identifying correspondence through Buckner for those who are not ready for direct communication. The Exchange Guidelines for Confidential Adoptions would need to be utilized and the cost incurred would be drawn from the searcher's fees.
- For the found party who may not want contact, we will attempt to determine why they feel contact is not possible at this time. We will also ask if they would be willing to complete an update with medical information and perhaps write the searching party a letter with an explanation as to why contact is not possible at this time. Buckner will make every attempt to facilitate contact of one form or another between parties. In the instances when life circumstances prohibit the found party from participating in correspondence or a relationship, Buckner must respect the found party's decision. No identifying information obtained in the search can be released to the searching party.

A search will be terminated when:

- A contact has been made and determination completed, or
- The original \$375.00 fee has been used and the searching individual does not wish to apply additional funds towards continuing the search, or
- There are no additional avenues that Buckner can legally pursue in search of the party.

When your child turns 18, he/she may participate in the Buckner Mutual Consent Adoption Registry, or may request any of the above services for himself/herself.

Services for Adoptees

De-identified copies of your adoption record

Fee: \$80.00

Texas state law allows adoptive parents and adult adoptees (18 and over) to obtain a copy of their file which has been edited to protect the confidentiality of their birth families. The amount of information in records varies, but usually includes information on the adopted person's birth, medical and social information regarding the birth families and circumstances surrounding the adoption. If anyone from the birth family has been in contact with Buckner subsequent to the relinquishment, that information will be included. If the file has been updated, all non-identifying updated information will be contained in the file copy as well.

Upon receipt of the Request for Services Form, copies of two forms of identification and the \$80.00 fee, the file will be retrieved from storage. The post-adoption counselor will de-identify the record and make a photocopy of it.

Records are prepared in the order requests are received. Please allow at least two to three months from the time of your request to the receipt of your file. We have many requests and only one part-time staff person to complete the de-identified records.

Post-adoption Counseling

Fee: \$75.00 per hour

Buckner provides time limited counseling related to search, reunion and adoption issues. This would be available to an adoptee or any member of the adoptee's family. Adoptees often seek counseling related to telling their parents that they desire information on their birth family or that they desire to search. Occasionally adoptees may feel the need for counseling related to identity issues or feelings of loss and/or abandonment.

Affidavit or Single Document Copy

Fee: \$10.00

Sometimes you may only want a single document copy (such as the adoption decree or the labor & delivery information sheet on your birth). Occasionally adoptees need an affidavit related to their adoption (for social security or to obtain a passport, or to verify Indian heritage). You may also receive a copy of an update that your birth parent may have completed.

Buckner Mutual Consent Adoption Registry

Fees: Filing & Post-Adoption Conference Fee: \$90.00

A registry is a system set up and maintained to provide a means for biological relatives separated by adoption to have contact with one another. State governments, adoption agencies or search and support groups may run registries. Most registries are open to consenting adults, and require both parties to mutually and independently register before a "match" can be made.

The Buckner Mutual Consent Adoption Registry (not a part of the Texas State Registry) has the following requirements for participation:

- Completion and notarization of the one-page form entitled BUCKNER MUTUAL CONSENT ADOPTION REGISTRY. This may be done with a notary at Buckner, or elsewhere.
- Submitting copies of two forms of identification, one of which must be photo identification. Examples of acceptable documents are: valid driver's license, student identification card, employment identification card, birth certificate, social security card, health insurance card, or voter's registration. (No copies of credit cards, please).
- A one-hour post-adoption conference. While it is preferable to arrange an in-person conference through Buckner, we can arrange a phone conference if you live a great distance away. Payment would need to be received prior to scheduling a time for a phone conference.
Should you prefer to obtain the one-hour post-adoption conference in your area, we can assist in finding a qualified counselor. We would need to send the counselor our requirements for areas covered in the conference, and then receive written verification of the one-hour conference. {Please do not make an appointment with the counselor prior to receiving acceptance of the counselor's qualifications from Buckner and having Buckner send them an informational packet.} Buckner requires the post-adoption conference at the time of registration for compliance with our policies related to the Buckner Mutual Consent Adoption Registry. It is also required by Texas State law prior to the release of any identifying information once a match is made. (This conference meets the requirement to initiate an active search through Buckner). We believe that this conference provides the participant with an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers about the registry, as well as various aspects of search, reunion and other post-adoption issues. Participants have the chance to explore emotions, expectations, experiences and possible outcomes of contact. Participants gain knowledge of themselves, a perspective of adoption from the other triad members' points of view and are better prepared to meet the challenges and demands that contact with birth relatives entails.
- Receipt of appropriate fees and verifications. \$90.00 for conference through Buckner, or \$15.00 filing fee and the Verification of Post-Adoption Conference form if the conference is done elsewhere.

The Buckner Mutual Consent Adoption Registry is strictly passive in nature. Buckner makes no attempt to seek out either party, nor does it release any information (prior to registration) as to whether one or the other party is registered.

When a match occurs, both parties are notified that there has been a mutual registration. The Buckner counselor will ask each party whether they are interested in pursuing contact. If both parties are interested, the Buckner counselor will outline options available. Before any identifying information can be given, both parties must sign under oath a waiver of confidentiality, in which they state their intention to give up the confidentiality provided under Texas state law.

Active Search for Birthmother

Fee: \$375.00 *

You may request that Buckner Children and Family Services (Buckner) facilitate an active search for your birthmother at any time after you turn 18 years of age.

Prior to facilitating a search, Buckner would require:

- One-hour post-adoption conference
- Notarized Waiver of Confidentiality & Release of liability (signed AFTER counseling and before contacting your birthmother)
- Non-identifying letter for your birthmother. (written AFTER counseling and before contacting your birthmother)

*Most searches can be completed for the flat fee of \$375.00. The fee covers the cost of actual record searches, private investigator's fees and retrieval of public documents, such as marriage records, birth & death records, etc. The flat fee covers the worker's time (which would include time spent on letters, record requests, and telephone contacts with the searcher as well as outside contacts) up to a total of 6 hours. Should the fee of \$375.00 be used up before a search is completed, the Buckner worker would contact the searching party to determine if they wish to pursue the search any further. Any continuance of the search would require a deposit of \$150.00 against which services could be drawn. The worker's time would then be billed at the rate of \$75.00 per hour.

Determination of Search:

Once contact has been made with the found party, the Buckner counselor will apprise the found party of the following options available to them:

- A direct exchange of identifying information by both parties, so that direct communication can occur. (This would require that the found party be willing to participate in the hour post-adoption conference and sign a waiver of confidentiality & release of liability, as was required of the searcher.)
- Exchanges of non-identifying correspondence through Buckner for those who are not ready for direct communication. The Exchange Guidelines for Confidential Adoptions would need to be utilized and the cost incurred would be drawn from the searcher's fees.
- For the found party who may not want contact, we will attempt to determine why they feel contact is not possible at this time. We would ask if they would be open to receiving the de-identifying letter, which the adoptee has written. We will also ask if they would be willing to complete an update with medical information and perhaps write the searching party a letter with an explanation as to why contact is not possible at this time. Buckner will make every attempt to facilitate contact of one form or another between parties. In the instances when life circumstances prohibit the found party from participating in correspondence or a relationship, Buckner must respect the found party's decision. *No identifying information obtained in the search can be released to the searching party.*

Termination of Search:

A search will be terminated when:

- A contact has been made and determination completed, or
- The original \$375.00 fee has been used and the searching individual does not wish to apply additional funds towards continuing the search, or
- There are no additional avenues that Buckner can legally pursue in search of the party.

A search for the birthfather would involve the same guidelines as above, and an additional search fee of \$375.00.

Services for Birth Parents

Background History Request for Birth Parents

Fee: \$80.00

Many birth parents did not receive information about their child's birth or the family with whom their child was placed. You may receive actual copies of any documents you signed, copies of medical records in the file related to your child's delivery and non-identifying information about the adoptive parents.

Information pertaining to the adoptive parents is often limited to their ages, physical descriptions, religions, education levels, occupation, length of marriage and whether or not they had other children when your child was placed with them. All information was obtained at the time the adoptive parents applied to Buckner, and only rarely do files contain any updated information. Sometimes the files do contain notes from the supervision period (the six months following the placement of your child in their home). Any non-identifying information contained in the file and any information on contacts made by your child or the adoptive parents would be part of this background history. Upon receipt of the Background History Request Form, two forms of identification, and the \$70.00 fee, the file will be retrieved from storage. A counselor will then make copies of documents you signed and any medical records available. Information regarding your child's stay in foster care (if applicable) and information on the adoptive parents will be presented in a typewritten format.

Records are prepared in the order requests are received. Please allow at least two to three months from the time of your request to the receipt of your file.

Post-adoption Counseling

Fee: \$75.00 per hour

Buckner provides time limited counseling related to search, reunion and adoption issues. This would be available to a birth parent, or any member of the birth parent's family. Birth parents often seek counseling related to telling other children about the relinquished child, or how to work through the delayed grief they may be experiencing over the placement of a child.

Affidavit of Single Document Copy

Fee: \$10.00

Sometimes you may only want a single document copy (such as the relinquishment you signed or the labor & delivery information sheet on your child). Occasionally birth parents need an affidavit related to the relinquishment of their child (for admissions into the armed services, to leave something to a child in a will, etc.).

Buckner Mutual Consent Adoption Registry

Fees: Filing & Post-Adoption Conference Fee: \$90.00

A registry is a system set up and maintained to provide a means for biological relatives separated by adoption to have contact with one another. State governments, adoption agencies or search and support groups may run registries. Most registries are open to consenting adults, and require both parties to mutually and independently register before a "match" can be made.

The Buckner Mutual Consent Adoption Registry (not a part of the Texas State Registry) has the following requirements for participation:

- Completion and notarization of the one-page form entitled BUCKNER MUTUAL CONSENT ADOPTION REGISTRY. This may be done with a notary at Buckner, or elsewhere.
- Submitting copies of two forms of identification, one of which must be photo identification. Examples of acceptable documents are: valid driver's license, student identification card, employment identification card, birth certificate, social security card, health insurance card, or voter's registration. (No copies of credit cards, please).
- A one-hour post-adoption conference. While it is preferable to arrange an in-person conference through Buckner, we can arrange a phone conference if you live a great distance away. Payment would need to be received prior to scheduling a time for a phone conference.
Should you prefer to obtain the one-hour post-adoption conference in your area, we can assist in finding a qualified counselor. We would need to send the counselor our requirements for areas covered in the conference, and then receive written verification of the one-hour conference. {Please do not make an appointment with the counselor prior to receiving acceptance of the counselor's qualifications from Buckner and having Buckner send them an informational packet.} Buckner requires the post-adoption conference at the time of registration for compliance with our policies related to the Buckner Mutual Consent Adoption Registry. It is also required by Texas State law prior to the release of any identifying information once a match is made. (This conference meets the requirement to initiate an active search through Buckner). We believe that this conference provides the participant with an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers about the registry, as well as various aspects of search, reunion and other post-adoption issues. Participants have the chance to explore emotions, expectations, experiences and possible outcomes of contact. Participants gain knowledge of themselves, a perspective of adoption from the other triad members' points of view and are better prepared to meet the challenges and demands that contact with birth relatives entails.
- Receipt of appropriate fees and verifications. \$90.00 for conference through Buckner, or \$15.00 filing fee and the Verification of Post-Adoption Conference form if the conference is done elsewhere.

The Buckner Mutual Consent Adoption Registry is strictly passive in nature. Buckner makes no attempt to seek out either party, nor does it release any information (prior to registration) as to whether one or the other party is registered.

When a match occurs, both parties are notified that there has been a mutual registration. The Buckner counselor will ask each party whether they are interested in pursuing contact. If both parties are interested, the Buckner counselor will outline options available. Before any identifying information can be given, both parties must sign under oath a waiver of confidentiality, in which they state their intention to give up the confidentiality provided under Texas state law.

Active Search for Birthchild

Fee: \$375.00 *

You may request that Buckner Children and Family Services (Buckner) facilitate an active search for your birth child at any time after he or she turns 18 years of age. Prior to facilitating a search, Buckner would require:

- One-hour post-adoption conference
- Signed Waiver of Confidentiality & Release of Liability (signed AFTER counseling and before contacting your birth child)
- Completed birth parent update and non-identifying letter for your birth child.

*Most searches can be completed for the \$375.00 fee. The fee covers the cost of actual record searches, private investigator's fees, and retrieval of public documents, such as marriage records, birth & death records, etc. The worker's time (which would include time spent on letters, record requests, telephone contacts with the searcher as well as outside contacts) is billed against the fee at a cost of \$65.00 per hour. Should the fee of \$375.00 be used up before a search is completed, the Buckner worker would contact the searching party to determine if they wish to pursue the search any further. Any continuance of the search would require a deposit of \$100.00, against which services could be drawn.

Determination of Search:

Once contact has been made with the found party, the Buckner counselor will apprise the found party of the following options available to them:

- A direct exchange of identifying information by both parties, so that direct communication can occur. (This would require that the found party be willing to participate in the hour post-adoption conference and sign a waiver of confidentiality, as was required of the searcher.)
- Exchanges of non-identifying correspondence through Buckner for those who are not ready for direct communication. The Exchange Guidelines for Confidential Adoptions would need to be utilized and the cost incurred would be drawn from the searcher's fees.

For the found party who may not want contact, we will attempt to determine why they feel contact is not possible at this time. We will also ask if they would be willing to complete an update with medical information and perhaps write the searching party a letter with an explanation as to why contact is not possible at this time. Buckner will make every attempt to facilitate contact of one form or another between parties. In the instances when life circumstances prohibit the found party from participating in correspondence or a relationship, Buckner must respect the found party's decision. No identifying information obtained in the search can be released to the searching party.

Termination of Search:

A search will be terminated when:

- A contact has been made and determination completed, or
- The original \$375.00 fee has been used and the searching individual does not wish to apply additional funds towards continuing the search, or
- There are no additional avenues that Buckner can legally pursue in search of the party.

Update Child's File**Fee: \$20.00**

You may want to update your birth child's file with current medical and social information. Buckner provides a form for this purpose (Birth Parent Update). All information on the form is optional and you may indicate whether you wish to release only medical information or social information as well.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does it cost money to obtain post adoption services?

Buckner incurs many expenses in providing post-adoption services, such as: storage fees for maintaining files of records dating back to the early 1900's, rental of office space, staff salaries, utilities, insurance, office supplies, postage, printing, etc. Buckner is a not-for-profit agency, funded by fees for services and donations. While fees for post adoption services do not totally cover the cost of providing services, they do help to defray the cost. The post-adoption department relies on donations to help make up the difference.

Will my adoptive parents be notified of my contact with Buckner?

If you are 18 years of age or older, you are considered an adult and your contact with Buckner is confidential. Your adoptive parents will not be notified.

Why can't Buckner give me the names of my birth parents? (or birth child?)

Texas is considered a "closed records state," which means that once an adoption occurs, all records become confidential. Child-placing agencies licensed by the state are required by law to maintain the confidentiality of all the parties in an adoption, unless the parties sign Waivers of Confidentiality. (see question 4)

If a birth parent and the adoptee both want to meet, why must they have counseling first?

The state of Texas requires an hour of post-adoption counseling prior to the exchange of identifying information. Before signing the Waiver of Confidentiality, the state wants to insure that it is an informed decision. Thus, post adoption counseling involves providing information on the various aspects of contact and reunion. The counselor will share what experience has shown about the stages of reunion and the factors that might influence the success of a particular reunion. The counselor can also provide information and referrals for sources of support for those seeking contact.

Why does it take so long to get services?

Because Buckner has been facilitating adoptions for so many years, the number of people requesting services increases every year. While we do give priority to cases involving medical emergencies (which require verification), it is our policy to provide services in the order in which the request is received. Depending on the volume of requests, the time it takes to respond to requests could be anywhere from one to three months.