



# SNOWFLAKES<sup>®</sup> EMBRYO ADOPTION PROGRAM

## Frequently Asked Questions by Adopting Families

Revised 03.09.2010

### GENERAL QUESTIONS

#### **What services does Nightlight<sup>®</sup> Christian Adoptions (Nightlight) offer?**

Nightlight is licensed to provide the following services:

- Domestic and International Home studies
- Domestic Adoptions: Agency, Identified (Modified) or Interstate Adoptions
- Adoption Service Provider for Independent Adoptions
- International Adoptions: Programs in Cambodia, China, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Taiwan, and Ukraine
- Snowflakes<sup>®</sup> Embryo Adoption Program
- Birthparent counseling services

#### **Is Nightlight a non-profit agency?**

Yes, we are a 501(c)(3) non-profit agency. Fees paid by adoptive parents as well as any fundraising efforts throughout the year cover agency expenses.

#### **What is your licensure information?**

Nightlight Christian Adoptions has been licensed by the California State Department of Social Services since 1959. Nightlight's Home study services are available to families within Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura Counties.

#### **What if we are not Christians; will you still work with us?**

The "Christian" in our name explains who we are; it does not necessarily describe who our clients are. We work with families from all religious backgrounds. We need all types of families to meet the various adopting and embryo placing parents' criteria.

#### **How is "embryo adoption" through Nightlight different from "embryo donation" that clinics offer?**

"Embryo donation" is a program fertility clinics offer. Although some programs may vary, embryo donation differs from adoption in that the receiving family does not have a home study prepared, the donor families are anonymous, and there is no contact between the families before or after birth, even through an intermediary.

Snowflakes goes beyond the embryo donation provided by fertility clinics by offering the safeguards and education available in a traditional adoption. A homestudy is prepared on the adopting family that includes screening and education. The placing family is able to select an adopting family (as opposed to the doctor in a clinic making the selection of a family), they will know if a child(ren) is born from the adopted embryos. The placing family may also delegate this responsibility to Nightlight, a licensed adoption agency. Our program recognizes the importance of counseling all parties involved. Most importantly, at Nightlight we recognize the personhood of embryos and we treat them as precious pre-born children.

#### **Who would want to participate in this program?**

Snowflakes can help create families for couples whose infertility does not allow them to create their own genetic families, specifically couples considering egg or sperm donation, or couples who want to build their family through adoption and be able to experience pregnancy and control the pre-natal environment of their child.

***Why would genetic parents choose embryo adoption instead of donation?***

The genetic family wants to select who will adopt their embryos and know the outcome of the adoption and transfer. They are reassured that Snowflakes provides the same safeguards that the traditional adoption process offers. The genetic family knows the adoptive family has been screened for a criminal history and child abuse record, and received education about how to parent an adopted child. They have the peace of mind of having handpicked a family for these children. They also have the opportunity to have contact with the adopting family to whatever extent both families are comfortable.

***Why would we choose embryo adoption instead of donation?***

You would have a chance to have a relationship with your child's genetic family. Whether you exchange pictures and letters, have telephone conversations, or choose to meet the genetic family, you will know that you have access to information about your child's history. Nightlight is available to facilitate communication between the families and is also available to educate and work with you about how to talk to your child(ren) about their unique conception and adoption-related issues.

***Why would we choose embryo adoption instead of traditional adoption of a newborn?***

The most obvious difference between an embryo adoption and a traditional domestic adoption is the pregnancy experience. Adoptive moms are able to experience the joys (and challenges!) of pregnancy and labor. You also have the peace of mind of knowing what your child was exposed to during pregnancy.

Although an embryo adoption allows more control in some ways, it provides less in other ways. You cannot choose the gender of the child as you might in an international or older child adoption, and you cannot change your mind and choose not to accept the baby for whatever reason after he or she is born. In addition, because up to three embryos are implanted at once, you might have twins or triplets. Embryo adoption can also be more difficult emotionally than traditional adoption, since there is no guarantee that in the end you will have a child.

***How many embryo adoptions has Nightlight completed?***

To date Nightlight has matched 441 genetic families (with approx. 3234 embryos) with 302 adopting families. There are 223 Snowflakes children and 14 adopting families are currently expecting 19 babies.

***Are there any other Agencies that offer Embryo Adoption?***

As embryo adoption has become more well-known, other agencies have begun programs similar to Snowflakes. As these programs are relatively new, please visit [www.embryoadooption.org](http://www.embryoadooption.org) to get the latest information.

***Does Nightlight encourage the creation and freezing of embryos?***

No, we are trying to provide a loving option to the families of the 500,000 (estimated) embryos frozen in clinics throughout the United States. As people (and clinics) have become more aware of all their available options in regards to the disposition of their embryos following in-vitro fertilization and become more attentive to the possibility of having remaining embryos, we have noticed an increased effort to limit the number of embryos that are created and to have plans in place for the disposition of their embryos following IVF. We would really prefer to work ourselves out of a job!

**PROGRAM CRITERIA FOR EMBRYO ADOPTION**

***What are the basic requirements for an adopting family?***

You must have a completed home study. This is the same home study used to evaluate and educate adopting parents in traditional domestic adoptions. The adopting mother must also be able to carry a child to term. Your doctor will be asked to provide a letter stating that there are no contraindications to pregnancy. Additional requirements are listed on the enclosed "Eligibility Requirements" form.

***Is there an age limit for the adopting mother?***

The genetic family's preferences will determine the allowable age of adopting parents. Although the recommended upper age limit is 45, if you are over the age of 45 you must have a letter of recommendation from the fertility doctor who will be performing your Frozen Embryo Transfer. In addition, we request that you speak with Megan in the Snowflakes department before submitting your application. Older adoptive parents

will likely have a longer waiting time to be matched and we want to give you an honest evaluation of what the process will look like for you if you are over age 45.

***Can couples who do not have an infertility diagnosis adopt embryos?***

Yes. Some genetic families prefer to place their embryos with families who already have children so the children born from the embryos are sure to have siblings. Other genetic families prefer to place with families who do not yet have children.

***Does Snowflakes handle out-of-state embryo adoptions?***

Yes. We can work with adopting families living in any state. You would just need to work with a local adoption agency to complete your home study.

***Can you work with families living in another country?***

This is handled on a case by case basis. Please call our office and ask to speak with someone in the Snowflakes Program, or e-mail us at [info@nightlight.org](mailto:info@nightlight.org), to discuss your specific situation.

***Can single women adopt through Snowflakes?***

Yes, however we feel it only fair to tell you that in our experience genetic families prefer placement with a married couple. As a single woman, you will likely have to wait longer for embryos and perhaps will not be matched within the time period you hope to become pregnant. Please contact our office if you are interested in adopting as a single mother to discuss your specific situation.

## **THE LEGALITY OF EMBRYO ADOPTION**

***Is there legal precedence for the adoption of frozen embryos?***

No. Currently there are no states with laws governing embryo adoption. Nightlight uses the same steps and similar forms to those used in domestic adoption. It is our hope that instead of creating a new set of laws, the current laws for adoption will simply be expanded to include embryos.

***What are the legal issues with embryo adoption?***

The adoption agreement and relinquishment forms are legal contracts between you and your genetic family. As there are no laws regarding adoption of embryos, we have created the contract to match the current position of the courts that the embryos are property. The contract covers the transfer of property and also includes additional adoption language. These legal forms are signed and executed *prior* to the embryos being shipped to your clinic and *before* the embryos are implanted in the adoptive mother.

***For how long is the placing family's relinquishment valid?***

When you sign the contract to adopt the embryos, you become their legal owners. When the embryos are received at your clinic, you can begin scheduling your transfer. The contract is irrevocable for a period of one year. After one year, if there are frozen embryos remaining, the genetic family has the option to revoke the contract as to remaining embryos. It is important to note that revoking the contract requires affirmative action on the part of the genetic family. Likewise, if for any reason you decide you do not want to do anymore transfers with the embryos, the embryos will be returned to the original genetic family for placement with another adoptive family. Based on our previous experience, it is much more likely that an adoptive family will return remaining embryos to the genetic family than that a genetic family will request to have the embryos returned.

***Isn't this just surrogacy?***

No. In surrogacy, an agreement is made for a woman to carry a pregnancy for the benefit of the intended parents. In our program the genetic parents relinquish all rights to the child prior to implantation. The child that the adoptive mother carries is the child that the adoptive couple will parent.

### ***Are there any states that place restrictions on the shipping of embryos?***

Yes. **New York** does not allow embryos to be shipped *into* the state; this is due to their strict human tissue laws. If you live in New York, we are able to work with you to adopt embryos, however please contact our office for more information as to how this will affect your adoption.

## **THE EMBRYO ADOPTION PROCESS**

### ***What are the steps involved in adopting embryos?***

1. **Application Phase -**
  1. **Fill out the Adoptive Parent Application** and **sign the Agreement for Adoption Services**. Mail them to our office along with a current family photo and the application fee.
  2. **Complete a Homestudy**
  3. **Contact your doctor** to have him/her provide you with a letter (must be on letterhead with an original signature) that states you have *"no contraindications to pregnancy"*.
  4. **Family Profile** - Create a family profile including pictures of your family, a 'Dear Genetic Family' letter, and a short autobiography (instructions are sent to you once we receive your application).
2. **Pre-Matching Interview with the Social Worker** - Our social worker contacts you to discuss your matching requirements and your preference for contact with the genetic family.
3. **Matching Phase** - Your profile is sent to a genetic family. If they select you, you receive their Family Profile and medical health history for consideration. You decide to accept or decline the match.
4. **Contract Phase** - You receive an Embryo Adoption Agreement to be signed and notarized designating the adoption of the embryos from the family you have selected.
5. **Travel coordination (and possible blood testing)** - We send the embryology reports and infectious disease test results from the genetic couple to your fertility doctor. Your doctor informs us if additional lab work is needed before the embryos can be accepted into their facility. If necessary, we will contact and provide your genetic family with a lab order to do additional blood testing. Once the lab work is completed we can schedule a date for the embryos to travel to your clinic.
6. **Frozen Embryo Transfer (FET)** - After your embryos arrive at your clinic you arrange with your doctor when your transfer attempt will be scheduled and notify us of the date. After the thaw and/or transfer is complete, you will again notify our office as to the number of embryos thawed, how many embryos survived the thaw and were transferred. Genetic parents will be notified unless otherwise specified.
7. **Pregnancy Test Results** - Typically about two weeks after your transfer, you return to your doctor for a pregnancy test and notify our office of the results.
8. **Pregnancy** - This is your time to experience the joy of being pregnant!
9. **Birth** - Congratulations! As soon as possible after your baby (or babies) is born, notify our office so we can celebrate with you! We inform the genetic family on the joyous outcome unless otherwise specified.
10. **Post-Adoption** - Complete one post adoption report with your social worker six weeks after your baby(ies) was/were born. At three, six, and nine months of age, you will send an update to Snowflakes. Correspondence between you and your genetic family is separate.

## **QUESTIONS ABOUT THE HOME STUDY**

### ***What is an adoption home study?***

The mandatory adoption home study is an evaluation and education tool to help us, as an agency, and you, as adopting parents, to determine your preparedness to parent through adoption. It is not a psychological analysis; our intent is to prepare you for the special needs of an adoptee and to help you build important parenting skills. The home study is different for each adoption as everyone has different histories and experiences that they bring into the process. It consists of paperwork, education, and interviews. If you live in South Carolina or Southern California, Nightlight Christian Adoptions will perform your homestudy.

### ***How can we find a local agency to do our home study?***

If you live in South Carolina or Southern California, Nightlight Christian Adoptions will perform your homestudy. If you are not in these areas and are unfamiliar with agencies in your area, you may contact our office and we will provide you with a list of agencies in your state (if available) that other families have worked with.

You may have difficulty finding an agency to do a home study for embryo adoption, as some agencies are unaware of it or do not yet feel comfortable educating parents about adopting embryos. For purposes of the Snowflakes Program, *we require the same home study that you would have for a traditional, domestic adoption, including an open adoption and adoptive parenting education component.* Most state agencies/social services departments do not complete pre-placement homestudies, and the ones who do most often will not provide a copy to an outside agency. For these reasons **we ask you to work with a private, licensed adoption agency.** If an agency you are working with would like more information on the program, please contact your adoption worker and we will be happy to provide them with information.

***Is there anything specific the home study needs to include in order to fulfill your requirements?***

***Yes! It is imperative that the adoption agency with whom you are working provide a formal educational component regarding raising adopted children.*** Generally speaking, if you are working with a licensed agency, they will usually have some type of educational component incorporated into their home study process (i.e. adoption classes, required reading, etc.). You should check with your social worker prior to beginning your home study to ensure that he or she is familiar with the guidelines listed below.

Regardless of with whom you are working, the educational component should address those lifelong issues involved with raising adopted children, the level of desired communication between genetic and adoptive parents, and how to explain to your child the complex nature of his or her conception in age-appropriate terms. You should also ask your social worker to help you explore how embryo adoption may be different from a traditional domestic adoption. Nightlight can provide you with an Embryo Adoption Education outline of issues for you to discuss with your social worker.

***Your social worker should make note of the embryo adoption education discussion in your home study, in addition to the formal general adoption education classes that are also required.*** If your social worker has any questions, have them contact Nightlight for further clarification. Once your home study is complete please have your social worker forward an original signed copy to our office.

***We have a completed home study; can we ask our home study agency to forward you a copy?***

Yes. You should be free to call your agency and ask them to send an original signed copy of your current valid home study to our office. We have not had problems with private adoption agencies sending your home study. State Social Services usually will not send an original copy to another agency.

***Will our home study need to be updated?***

If you have a completed an international home study you will need to update it for a domestic adoption. If your domestic home study is over one year old and/or you have had a child placed in your home since its completion, you will need to update your home study.

***May the home study be used for a domestic adoption if we determine that we are not going to become pregnant?***

Yes, with the completed home study you are in the position to look at domestic adoption once you determine that you have completed the embryo adoption process. Set limits for yourself based on time, a pre-determined number of transfer attempts, money, or a combination of these factors and move on to another program if you reach those limits. To adopt a child domestically or internationally you will likely need an additional educational component. Discuss this option with your social worker while you are in the home study process.

## **THE MATCHING PROCESS**

***How are genetic and adopting families matched?***

It is a mutual selection matching process. Both genetic and adopting families provide Nightlight with information about themselves and indicate what type of family they are looking for. The genetic family indicates their preferences for the following: adoptive family's age, length of marriage, number of children, income, work/childcare plans, religion, prior marriages, and ethnicity as well as their desire for future contact. When we have an adopting family on file who matches those criteria, their Family Profile is sent to the genetic family for consideration/selection. If the adopting family is selected by the genetic family, the genetic family's Family Profile and medical information are sent to the adopting family for consideration/selection.

***What information do we receive on the genetic family?***

Adoptive parents receive a Family Profile including some autobiographical information and generally a few pictures. You also receive three generations of medical health history on the genetic family. If an egg donor or sperm donor was used, you will receive any information the genetic parents received when they selected their donor. This may include autobiographical information, health information, and possibly pictures. You will not receive information about the embryos themselves. While doctor's may suggest you seek a certain grade/stage of embryo to adopt, we have seen embryos deemed "excellent" not achieve pregnancy, and embryos deemed "poor quality" born nine months later as healthy babies. The embryo grade and quality cannot guarantee or prevent a pregnancy. Your doctor and embryologist will receive the information about the embryos and their stage of development so they know how to adequately culture and care for them during your frozen embryo transfer.

***Does this type of adoption have to be open adoption?***

Open adoption encompasses a wide spectrum of contact. It does not mean that you meet, exchange last names or other identifying information, but does mean that generally families select each other through a letter, biographies, and photos. In most cases you will know each other's first names and which state you live in. This information is shared at a minimum to give you enough information to protect children from meeting and marrying. By virtue of having this information about the other family, all our adoptions are considered open. Whether you want more contact (via e-mail, phone, photos or letters, sent either directly or through the agency) or less contact, we will match you with a like-minded family. If a genetic family elects for Nightlight to choose the adoptive family for them and does not want any contact we will match them with an adoptive family who will be comfortable handling that type of situation.

You may also want to look into adoption support groups in your area or go online to talk to families who are currently in an open adoption, as most couples are apprehensive when considering open adoption and become more comfortable as they become educated about what it means to your child, your family and your child's genetic family. You may also choose to be connected with someone who has been through embryo adoption and is willing to talk with other families about their experiences. If you are interested in this option, please contact our office.

***Why choose open adoption?***

The purpose of open adoption is to provide security for your child as they grow and begin to ask questions about their heritage and genetic origins. It provides answers for them, minimizing their loss of relationships by maintaining and celebrating their connections with all the important people in his or her life (especially in an embryo adoption where your child likely has full genetic siblings).

It also serves to provide comfort and encourage the genetic family with the knowledge that they have chosen a family for their embryos and will know the outcome of the adoption, including the peace that comes with knowing the child is happy and thriving; enjoying the life they hoped and prayed for.

Open adoption also empowers you in raising your child, by providing knowledge about your child's genetic family and their family medical history. During the home study, you will learn of the many positive aspects of open adoption and your social worker will discuss with you the contact arrangement you are most comfortable with. It is very important that you be honest and open with your social worker about the type of relationship you envision with your genetic family throughout the adoption and transfer process, after your child is born and throughout your child's life.

***May we be on a traditional adoption list AND work with embryo adoption?***

No. While we understand your desire to bring home a baby as soon as possible, once you are ready to be matched with a genetic family, we require that you work with only one adoption program. At that point you need to be ready to commit to the genetic family (or birthparents) you are matched with.

***How is embryo adoption different from traditional adoption concerning risk?***

Genetic parents differ from a "typical" traditional birthparent in several ways. A woman placing her born child for adoption may be unprepared for the emotions she will feel upon her child's birth and therefore may choose to parent her baby. In an embryo adoption the genetic parents are typically older, have a family, have been

through the infertility process, understand the demands of parenting a child or children and fully understand that they cannot emotionally and/or financially add additional children to their family. Most genetic families have had time to contemplate their options while their embryos are in storage before they contact us.

### ***Is there any risk that the genetic parents might change their minds?***

There is no more risk than with any other adoption. In fact, our experience indicates that if they have doubts they will place their file on hold before ever being matched with an adoptive family. Once they are matched, the genetic family transfers their ownership rights by signing a relinquishment prior to the embryos being shipped to your clinic. The genetic family has three business days from the date they sign the relinquishment in which to change their minds and notify the agency. In our years of placing embryos, this has never happened.

### ***Approximately how long does it take to get matched and get to the travel stage?***

- Application package usually takes **2-3 months** to complete and submit, depending on time required for your home study. Matching wait is usually **1-4 months**. The more open you are, the less time you will wait.
- Legal document notarization and embryo travel coordination usually takes **1-3 months**.
- In total, it can be between **5-13 months** before the embryos travel to your clinic. Each adoption is unique! You will have a special story to share with your child or children!

### ***How many embryos will we be matched with in total?***

You will adopt all of the embryos that a genetic family has, and you are able to adopt embryos from up to three genetic families if the first or second matches do not result in the birth of your baby. You might be matched with a genetic family who has two or three embryos, or you might be matched with a family who has ten or twelve. Most frequently genetic families have two, three, or four embryos to place for adoption. These may sound like small numbers, but with increased technology for freezing and thawing, more embryos are surviving the thaw process to be transferred. There is no maximum number of embryos a couple can adopt; you will adopt all the embryos a genetic family has to place. If you are matched with a family with three embryos and do not deliver a baby, you will be matched with another genetic family. When a baby is born, the adoption is complete. For example, if you are matched with a family with three embryos, become pregnant and deliver a baby (or two or three) your adoption would be complete and you would be able to adopt more embryos through a new adoption after your baby was home with you for nine months. (See Post Adoption section.) Re-matching is an option for couples who do not have a baby through their three matches.

### ***Will we be matched with multiple genetic parents?***

Possibly. Genetic families come to us with varying numbers of embryos to place for adoption. When you are matched with a genetic family you will adopt all of the embryos and begin your frozen embryo transfer cycle. If you do not become pregnant with those embryos, you will be matched with another genetic family. Over the course of your adoption, you will be matched with up to three genetic families or until a pregnancy is achieved, whichever comes first. Once you have a baby, your adoption is complete. *Please note: You must notify us that you want to be matched with your next genetic family within at least 12 months of your last frozen embryo transfer or your file will be closed due to inactivity.*

### ***How do multiple matches work?***

Once you select your first match with a genetic family, you will adopt those embryos, thaw and transfer them. If you do not become pregnant or miscarry the baby from your first match, you are assured a second match at no additional cost.

Once you select your second match with a genetic family, you will adopt those embryos, thaw and transfer them. If you do not become pregnant or miscarry the baby from the second match, you are assured a third match at no additional cost.

*Please note: You must notify us that you want to be matched with your next genetic family within at least 12 months of your last frozen embryo transfer or your file will be closed due to inactivity.*

Through these three genetic families, we will match you with at least six embryos in total. (We would not, for example, match you with three genetic families who each had one embryo.)

If you after you adopt, thaw, and transfer three sets of embryos you still have not given birth to your child(ren) you are able to do a “re-match” for \$2500 and we will start the matching process over. You will then have the opportunity to be matched with up to three genetic families.

***How did the agency decide on three genetic family matches?***

Most of our pregnancies have occurred during first, second, or third transfers. Fewer embryos are being frozen during IVF cycles therefore the assurance of three genetic family matches provides statistically good chances of achieving a pregnancy.

***Why do we need to thaw and transfer the first set before we can adopt the second set?***

In keeping with our mission of giving every embryo its chance at life, even if you adopt two or three embryos, we ask you to thaw and transfer your first set before adopting your second or third set (if needed) so that your second or third set of embryos does not sit in storage for a year or more while you experience pregnancy, give birth, bond with your baby, and decide whether you want to try again. It is also difficult for genetic parents to wait for a few years after the adoption to know the outcome of the transfer of their embryos, or to have to find a subsequent adoptive family for the embryos because they were not thawed and transferred by the original adoptive family.

***Can the Adoptive Family specify a specific embryo gender to adopt?***

No. Each of the embryos in our program is equally important and therefore we do not require that they undergo the genetic testing necessary to determine the sex of the embryo. Therefore just like in other pregnancies you will be “surprised” with the sex of the baby.

**SHIPPING OF THE EMBRYOS**

***Are the embryos stored at and shipped from your facility?***

No! We are **not** an embryo storage facility; we are an adoption agency. The embryos never come to our office but are sent directly to your clinic from your genetic family’s clinic or storage facility.

***When are the embryos shipped to our clinic?***

Embryos are shipped to your clinic after you are matched, the adoption agreement and relinquishments are signed, and we have made sure that all the requirements of the clinic, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and of the state into which they are being transferred have been met.

***Do we travel to the embryos or do the embryos travel to us?***

In most cases the embryos are transported to your fertility clinic. If you elect to travel to the clinic where the embryos are stored we can help you coordinate that with the clinic.

***How are the embryos shipped?***

The embryos will be shipped via Federal Express in a dry shipper. A dry shipper is a tank cooled with liquid Nitrogen that keeps the embryos safe while traveling.

***What if neither clinic has a dry shipper?***

Nightlight will arrange for a rental shipper.

**FROZEN EMBRYO TRANSFER (FET)**

***How many embryos may be transferred per cycle?***

We require that our families limit the number of embryos transferred to the number that they are willing to carry to term in the event that all the embryos attach. Generally, we encourage families to transfer no more than three (3) embryos.

***If we become pregnant with multiples, may we selectively reduce the pregnancy?***

No. We specifically require that our adopting families agree not to selectively reduce the number of fetuses that have begun developing. For this reason we recommend not transferring more than three embryos at a time. If our prohibition against selective reduction at any stage, for any reason, makes you uncomfortable, Snowflakes may not be right for you.

***What is the success rate for thawing and viability of embryos?***

Through Snowflakes, 2455 embryos have been thawed for transfer of which 53% (1310) were viable. However, the success rate for frozen embryo transfer varies by each clinic. The national average overall thaw success rate is 51%. With better freezing and thawing techniques, this percentage is likely to increase.

***What is the likelihood of a multiple pregnancy with frozen embryo transfer?***

Our understanding is that multiple births are much rarer with frozen embryo cycles than with “fresh” embryo transfers. But this is in no way a guarantee that you will not have multiples. About 1/3 of the Snowflakes moms who have achieved a pregnancy have carried multiples. Please consult ASRM and your fertility clinic for statistics.

***What is the success rate of pregnancies among Snowflakes families who have had embryo transfers?***

To date, our families have completed 521 transfers resulting in a pregnancy success rate of 43%. So far, 223 children have been born and 14 more moms are due with 19 babies. There are always families with recent transfers awaiting pregnancy test results and more families scheduling transfers.

***Why do you need to know how many embryos are thawed, transferred and implanted?***

We need to keep track of the number of embryos you still have to transfer and the time remaining on your genetic family’s relinquishment. The relinquishment must be valid to complete the transfers. When you let us know how many embryos you have thawed, how many were viable for transfer and how many you implanted, we are better able to keep track. In addition, if you are not in direct contact with your genetic family we need to keep them informed as to the status of your transfers and remaining embryos. Finally, like yourselves, most inquiring families want to know what our current statistics are and we are only able to provide accurate statistical information when we have this information.

**POST ADOPTION**

***What if we become pregnant and we still have embryos remaining?***

All embryos will be released to you in the relinquishment and you will initially have one year in which to thaw and transfer as many embryos as are needed. If more time is needed for any reason, including pregnancy, another relinquishment will be requested.

***How can we adopt more embryos after we have our first baby?***

After you have a baby (or babies) and you want to continue building your family through embryo adoption you can update your home study and your family profile to include your new child(ren) and send in a new application. Please wait nine months after the birth of your child(ren) before updating your home study and profile. This is to give adequate time for bonding and family adjustment before putting your energies into a new adoption. A \$500 discount will be given to returning clients.

***What if we do not become pregnant?***

If you have do not achieve a pregnancy and give birth to your child(ren) after thawing and/or implanting all of the embryos you adopted from your three matches, you can decide if you want to continue with Snowflakes and go through a re-matching process for a fee of \$2,500, or use your home study to pursue a domestic or international adoption.

***How many post adoption reports are required after the birth of our child(ren)?***

We require that your home study agency complete one post adoption report six weeks after your baby comes home. In addition, we require that you provide us with pictures and updates of your child(ren) three additional times during the first year, and once a year thereafter. This correspondence should be separate from the

information you share with your genetic family and serves as our way of knowing your child is healthy and happy, and can help us identify and provide you with any additional services or referrals, as needed.

***How do we tell our child(ren) of his/her unique conception, adoption and birth?***

“We adopted you as an embryo, which is a teeny baby, and the doctor put you in mommy’s tummy!” is a pretty good start. There are two great books available: *Our Wish for A Baby* by Janice Grimes from [www.xyandme.com](http://www.xyandme.com), and *Hope and Will Have A Baby* by Iréné Celcer from [www.hopeandwill.com](http://www.hopeandwill.com). Be sure to get the embryo donation/adoption versions!

When your child is born we will send you information about how to talk with your children about how they came to be a part of your family. Overall, honesty and openness with your children from the very beginning is the best approach, as it helps create trust and a positive, comfortable atmosphere around their adoption. It also allows you to begin open communication with your child so s/he will feel comfortable directly talking to you and asking you questions about anything in life, not only adoption. If at any time you have questions about your child’s genetic family, and you are not in direct contact with them, we are always here to be a liaison for you.

**PROGRAM FEES**

***What would you estimate the entire cost for the adoption to be?***

Snowflakes Program fee: \$8,000

Home study agency fee: \$1,000-3,000

Fertility clinic frozen embryo transfer fees: \$3,000-5,000

TOTAL FEES: \$12,000-16,000

*A full accounting of the program expenses for Snowflakes will be provided each month there is activity.*

***What additional out-of-pocket expenses can we expect?***

You may also have additional expenses involved in completing your homestudy (approx. \$500, for fingerprinting, medicals, DMV records, CPR/First Aid classes, etc.) and clinic fees for any subsequent FETs. Check with your home study agency and clinic for an estimate of these fees. If re-matching is requested the fee is \$2,500.

***What does the program fee cover?***

Genetic parent outreach and screening, providing counseling for all parties (and outside counseling referrals, if requested), matching services between genetic and adoptive parents, facilitating communication between genetic and adopting families, preparing contracts, relinquishments and other legal paperwork, facilitating consent and release forms if required by clinics prior to releasing embryos, facilitating communication between clinics and doctors to ensure that requirements are met for the transfer of the embryos between states, obtaining necessary laboratory tests for the genetic family, coordinating travel of the embryos, shipping fees, maintaining files, providing post-adoption support and supervision and cooperation in the court finalization process (if required by your state). Medical expenses involved in the FET are not included.

***Does the program fee include any of our medical expenses?***

No. You will need to pay the fertility clinic to thaw and transfer the embryos. Since medical expenses vary by provider, we encourage you to research clinics in your area. We have heard recent quotes from \$2,000-5,000 for a frozen embryo transfer attempt. This may or may not include any necessary medications needed to prepare the adoptive mother’s body for the embryo transfer and the costs of any subsequent transfers.

***Is the frozen embryo transfer (FET) covered by medical insurance?***

If your insurance covers infertility treatments, many of the expenses such as medications, hormone treatments and the transfer may be covered. We strongly encourage you to contact your insurance provider and find out what specific expenses, if any, they may cover.

***What are the costs to the genetic parents?***

There are no agency or program fees for the genetic parents to place their embryos for adoption.

**Is the genetic family reimbursed any of their infertility treatment costs?**

No. You do not pick up any costs prior to being matched with a genetic family. As with a traditional domestic adoption, where only expenses directly related to the pregnancy may be covered, in embryo adoption only expenses related to the adoption and transport of the embryos may be covered. You are only responsible for the cost of any blood work the genetic family must have performed which is necessary to ship the embryos to your clinic and shipping fees and these will be covered by your program fees.

**Do we help pay for any of the storage fees owed by the genetic parents?**

No. Once a match is made, the embryos are shipped to your clinic at your expense. Depending on how many embryos a genetic family has, there may be a chance that remaining embryos would again become their responsibility for storage fees and selection of another family.

**Does Embryo Adoption qualify for the Adoption Tax Credit?**

The Hope for Children Act provides a tax credit of up to \$12,150 per adopted child for families with combined incomes of \$222,180 or less. Since embryo adoption is not specifically included, we advise you to contact your tax preparer or the Internal Revenue Service directly to find out what expenses may qualify. Additional information on the tax benefit is available on the IRS web site at <http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc607.html>.

**Is there any financial assistance available for Embryo Adoption?**

We suggest you look into the following adoption assistance programs:

- **Employee Benefits**

Many companies are beginning to offer Adoption Benefits to their employees. The company may reimburse some of the adoption expenses paid by the employee, or they may offer paid adoption leave. Check with your Human Resources department to see if your company provides adoption benefits.

- Adoption Friendly Workplace, [www.adoptionfriendlyworkplace.org](http://www.adoptionfriendlyworkplace.org), part of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. Provides a free tool kit to help companies/employees establish an adoption friendly workplace.

- **Adoption Grants, Loans and other forms of financial assistance?**

*Various organizations offer financial assistance to adoptive families via adoption grants, loans or other assistance. Please contact each organization to find out about their services and what their qualifications and requirements are.*

- **GRANTS and LOANS**

- **The ABBA Fund**, [www.abbafund.org](http://www.abbafund.org), provides interest-free covenant loans to Christian couples who are called by God to expand their families through adoption.
- **The Cade Foundation**, [www.cadefoundation.org](http://www.cadefoundation.org), Provides up to \$10,000 to needy infertile families to assist with the costs associated with infertility treatment or domestic adoption.
- **Gift of Adoption Fund**, [www.giftofadoption.org](http://www.giftofadoption.org), awards grants based upon the needs of the waiting child and to pre-approved adopting parents who demonstrate an unusual degree of financial hardship.
- **God's Grace Adoption Ministry**, [www.ggam.org](http://www.ggam.org), provides grants of \$1,000-4,000 to Christian Couples with an annual income under \$60,000.
- **Kingdom Kids Adoption Ministries' Adoption Fundraising Program**, [www.kingdomkidsadoption.org](http://www.kingdomkidsadoption.org), helps families raise finances for adoption through our adoption fundraising/grant program.
- **Micah Fund**, [www.micahfund.org](http://www.micahfund.org), promotes the adoption of American Black and Black Biracial infants and children who live in Minnesota and surrounding cities.
- **National Adoption Foundation**, [www.nafadopt.org](http://www.nafadopt.org), provides direct grants, loans and a National Adoption Foundation Credit Card.
- **Pay It Forward Fertility Foundation**, <http://www.payitforwardfertility.org>, awards grants to couples for fertility treatments that are not covered by health insurance.

- **Shaohannah's Hope**, [www.shaohannahshope.org](http://www.shaohannahshope.org), provides grants to Christian families adopting domestically or internationally and encourages involvement from your church family in your adoption.

○ **OTHER RESOURCES**

- **A Mother's Love**, [www.amotherslovetfundraising.com](http://www.amotherslovetfundraising.com), assists families in fundraising for adoption and infertility costs.
- **Brittany's Hope**, [www.brittanyshope.org/financial.html](http://www.brittanyshope.org/financial.html), links to several sources of financial assistance for adoption.
- **Child Welfare Information Gateway** has information on funding adoption, [www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adoptive/funding.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adoptive/funding.cfm).
- **National Endowment for Financial Education** (NEFE), has a guide called "How to Make Adoption an Affordable Option" which can be accessed at [www.nefe.org/adoption](http://www.nefe.org/adoption).
- **National Military Family Association**, [http://www.nmfa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=reus\\_adoptionintro](http://www.nmfa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=reus_adoptionintro), provides information and links to Adoption Resources for Military Families, including the Adoption Reimbursement Program.

### QUESTIONS REGARDING CLINICS

***How do I find a clinic that will work within the parameters of Snowflakes?***

Ask your current fertility clinic if they are willing to receive embryos from another clinic and perform a frozen embryo transfer (FET), or research clinics in your area that report to the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM). Although we cannot recommend any specific clinic, if any Snowflakes families have worked with a clinic in your area we will provide you with the clinic's contact information. You would need to research and verify any clinic's success and/or medical expertise. Also if the clinic worked with a genetic family you will need to ask them if they are willing to work with an Adopting family in the Snowflakes Embryo Adoption Program.

***What should we ask when we are looking for a fertility clinic to help us with the medical portion of the program?***

Ask the clinic how much it would cost for an "FET," or frozen embryo transfer. Also ask if they are willing to accept embryos from another clinic. You may have to educate them about Snowflakes. We would be happy to send a package of information on the program to any doctors you are talking to about providing the frozen embryo transfer.

***We have found a local clinic that has agreed to receive frozen embryos from other clinics. However, they insist that the genetic family follow FDA guidelines regarding blood work. Do you handle this?***

Yes. We will communicate with your fertility clinic to ensure FDA regulations for lab work and donor screening are met by the genetic parents.

***What are the current requirements of the FDA for blood tests?***

The current FDA mandated blood tests include:

1. HIV 1 and 2
2. HTLV I/II
3. Hepatitis B surface antigen
4. Hepatitis B Core Antibody (IgG/IgM)
5. Hepatitis C Antibody
6. RPR (Syphilis)
7. CMV IgG/IgM
8. Gonorrhea/Chlamydia culture
9. Blood typing.
10. Rh factor

## **ADDITIONAL ADOPTION RESOURCES**

**Child Welfare Information Gateway**, [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov), is a great resource for families in any stage of the adoption process as it provides publications and links on many adoption topics.

**Focus On The Family**, has been a supporter of our program since July 1999, [www.family.org](http://www.family.org).

**Hannah's Prayer**, a Christian support network for couples facing "fertility challenges", [www.hannah.org](http://www.hannah.org)

**Clinic Success Rates** - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), is required by the Fertility Clinic Success Rate and Certification Act of 1992 to collect and report assisted reproductive technology (ART) clinic success rates. You can order copies of the report by calling the CDC at (770) 488-5372 or online through the CDC Web site at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/drh/art96> Section 3 reports on the success rates with frozen embryos in comparison to "fresh" cycles.

**SART** - Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology an affiliate organization of ASRM, <http://www.sart.com/home.html>

**ASRM** - American Society for Reproductive Medicine - [www.asrm.org](http://www.asrm.org)

**Resolve** - a national organization for the education and support of infertility [www.resolve.org](http://www.resolve.org)

**Tapestry Books**, [www.tapestrybooks.com](http://www.tapestrybooks.com), devoted to selling books on adoption.

**Adoptive Families Magazine**, [www.adoptivefamilies.org](http://www.adoptivefamilies.org).

**Adopting For Tomorrow**, Source for Adoption, Foster Care & Parenting - [www.adoptingtomorrow.com](http://www.adoptingtomorrow.com)

If your question was not answered and you would like it added to the list, please e-mail our office at [info@nightlight.org](mailto:info@nightlight.org). If you would like to speak to someone in the Snowflakes Department, please call our office at (714) 693-5437 and ask for **Megan Fabian**, Snowflakes Program Coordinator.