

WORKSHEET #4: What to Include in a Child's Photolisting Description

1. INCLUDE IN ALL PHOTOLISTINGS:

- **Picture of the child**
- **Child's first name or pseudonym**
- **Birth month and year:** Instead of posting the child's age, post the child's birth month and year. This ensures that the information is always up-to-date. Exclude the actual day of birth, as the full birthdate may communicate information that specifically identifies the child.
- **Ethnicity:** Note whether the child is African-American, Hispanic, Caucasian, Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, or is of more than one race or ethnicity, specifying these. Although this information is important, young adults counsel that it should not be over-emphasized.
- **Personality, interests, and hobbies:** Ask the child directly! Personality characteristics and personal interests bring the child to life for prospective adoptive families! The child becomes an individual, not simply a child without a home. If this information is not readily at hand, spend time observing the child or talk to individuals (such as foster parents) who know him best.
- **Educational status:** Note if the child is on grade level. Do not mention the actual grade as it can quickly outdate the photolisting. Decide on a case-by-case basis whether to state that the child is not on grade level or receives special education services.
- **Sibling placement or ongoing sibling contact:** If the child has a sibling or siblings and the intention is to place them together, note this information. The accompanying photograph should always be of the children as a group. If the child has a sibling and the children will not be adopted together, post information about the need for ongoing contact, if appropriate.
- **Whether or not the child is legally free for adoption:** In some states, a child is not considered legally freed for adoption until an adoptive family is identified. Prospective parents should be made aware of this special circumstance.
- **Major allergies** (such as to food, pets, or smoking).
- **Permanent, diagnosed medical conditions which do not stigmatize the child or can be included because the child's condition renders the child unable to read and understand the description:** These conditions include autism, moderate to severe mental retardation, deafness, blindness, muteness, Down Syndrome and cerebral palsy.
- **Language dominance** if the child is not primarily an English speaker.

“We appreciate that the ethnicity would be noted but stress that it should be noted in the same manner that the name and age are listed. We wanted it to be given as little reference as possible. We want to be considered for all of who we are and not define ourselves by our ethnicity.”—From a Youth Group



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- **Religion** of the birth or foster family (if it is important to the child).
- **Child's desires** with regard to a family (i.e., someone to bake cookies with or someone who lives in a house with a swing set in the back yard).

2. INCLUDE IN SOME PHOTOLISTINGS, BASED ON A CASE-BY-CASE DECISION:

- The child's receipt of special education services.
- Exceptional physical challenges the child faces: When such information is included, the photolisting should include "contact _____, to learn more about this child's physical care needs."
- The child's connectedness with friends or family that should be maintained.

3. NEVER INCLUDE IN PHOTOLISTINGS:

- Restrictions on types of adoptive families (such as: only single parents or families who live in the suburbs).
- Code words for aspects of the child's history or the child's condition. One example of the use of "code" words is "needs to be the youngest in the family" as indicating a history of sexual abuse. Code words are problematic because people may interpret the meaning of "code words" differently and appropriate families may screen themselves out based on a misunderstanding of the "code."
- Descriptions of the child's physical being (i.e., notations about the child's skin tone or descriptors such as short, tall, heavy, and "small for his age").
- Psychiatric diagnosis.
- Misleading information.
- Outdated information.
- Opinions of others about the child.
- Subsidy information. General information about adoption assistance should be shared in photolisting books and on Internet sites, but information about the individual child's eligibility for subsidy should not be included in the child's photolisting.

4. SAVE TO SHARE LATER IN THE ADOPTION PROCESS:

- Number of years the child has been in foster care
- Number of times the child has moved while in foster care
- Sexual or physical abuse history
- Why the child is in foster care
- Birth parents' medical and social history
- Detailed information on the child's ethnicity
- The child's HIV status

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- Hepatitis C status
- Basic health problems (such as asthma)
- Enuresis or encopresis
- Obesity or history of malnutrition
- Learning challenges
- Attachment problems
- Symptoms of (or a diagnosis of) fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol effects
- In-depth information regarding the child's strengths and interests
- Any information that appears to be important but is not factually based (such as guesses or speculations based on knowledge of the child, the child's history, and the child's current status)

Proofread all photolistings for spelling and grammatical errors!