



Undertaking a search for birth family in Korea

Information Sheet 2

The Post Adoption Support Service (PASS) provides assistance and support to persons adopted from Korea into South Australian families, who are considering seeking information or contact with their birth family.

Korea has a post adoption service provided by Eastern Social Welfare Society (ESWS). ESWS communicates on adoption matters only through Australian Government Departments and authorized agencies. In South Australia, PASS represents Korean adoptee's wishing to initiate a search for birth relatives.

All birth family searching and reunions are complex and with inter-country searches there are the added complexities of culture and language. Therefore any searching needs to be done with sensitivity and an understanding of the cultural issues for both the person in Australia and the person in Korea.

PASS provides practical assistance with the searching process as well as counseling and mediation if required. For example letters can be sent through PASS to family members in Korea. There is no charge for services from PASS.

If you would like PASS to initiate a search process on your behalf, PASS will gather information from you, such as your name at birth, place of birth and your Korean adoption file number. We will then write to ESWS requesting a search for your birth family information. ESWS will act on your behalf in doing the search and will be the mediator between PASS and your birth family members in Korea.

There are no guarantees on how long it can take for a birth family to be located, or in fact if the search will be fruitful. If found, they may decline contact, or may decline initially, and want contact at a later stage. Searching for birth families can be quite an emotional journey and PASS staff are able to support you through this.

At PASS, we are very aware that this is your search and your information. We will respect how fast or slow you want to take this search and your individual circumstances and needs.

The steps we suggest you take are:

1. Ring or email PASS to make an appointment with Sandi or Nikki to discuss your desire to search.
2. You may apply to see or get a copy of your adoption information from Adoption and Family Information Services (AFIS). This will be necessary if you do not have your Korean adoption file number or birth name. There is a fee for this although it is waived in certain situations. AFIS contact details are: (08) 8207 0060, Email: adoptions@dfc.sa.gov.au Web: <http://www.adoptions.sa.gov.au/>
3. When you are ready to proceed with searching, you will be asked to sign a PASS client registration form and also a form giving permission for PASS to share or receive information with Eastern Child Welfare in Korea.
4. PASS will also ask you to sign a form giving permission for PASS to let AFIS know to you have commenced a search. This is to ensure any mail sent to AFIS for you, is forwarded to you here at PASS.
5. It is suggested that you write a letter to your Korean birth family/foster parents for us to send to ESWS so that they can give this to your birth family member if they are able to locate them.
6. PASS will send an email and/or fax to Eastern Child Welfare stating that you are seeking information about your birth family and/or foster parents in Korea.

If ESWS are able to locate the person you are seeking they will notify PASS. Sometimes a letter or a photo from the found person will be sent at this time. However, please note that a reply may take months or years. Waiting for information can be difficult. Some people find that they think about it constantly and that it affects their ability to function at work or at home. PASS is able to offer ongoing support throughout the searching process.

PASS holds information sessions for people interested in searching for birth family. Please contact PASS if you would like to attend one of these.

PASS is located within Relationships Australia (SA) which has a bookshop and library with many adoption related resources. You can find stories of others who have searched and learn about their experiences which may be helpful to you.

There are other organisations which may have resources you'd like to access during your journey. Some may be able to provide contact with other adult adopted persons who have searched for birth family with a variety of results.

- East Meets West provides support and social opportunities for people adopted from overseas aged 10yrs up to, and including, adults.
Their contact details are: Email: info@eastmeetswest.org.au Phone(08) 8132 1570
Web: www.eastmeetswest.org.au
- Inter-Country Adoptee Support Network (ICASN) is a support group of inter-country adopted person who keep in contact through email.
Email contact icasn@bigpond.net.au web: www.icasn.org

If you are interested in meeting others who are going through the search process, please contact PASS for information about support groups and gatherings.