

ADOPTION SEARCH, CONTACT AND REUNION SERVICES FACT SHEET AND OVERVIEW

The Social Services Administration of Maryland's Department of Human Services (DHS) oversees Adoption Search, Contact and Reunion Services for adoptions that were finalized in Maryland. These services consist of two programs: the Mutual Consent Voluntary Adoption Registry (MCVAR) and Adoption Search, Contact and Reunion Services (ASCARS). ASCARS is provided by Confidential Intermediaries (CI) who are trained and certified by the Social Services Administration. MCVAR is a confidential, cross-referencing database of adult adoptees, birth parents, and birth siblings. When a match occurs, the identities are verified and contact is facilitated based on the party's consent. ASCARS involves the active search for birth relatives by CI. If the parties are open to communication, the CI helps facilitate contact.

The Social Services Administration ensures all applications are complete. Once an application is complete the Registrant information is entered into MCVAR. MCVAR checks for matches with existing registrants. If a match is found, the Administration confirms its accuracy and shares the completed application, consent forms and contact information for the registrants to the CI.

If no match is found, and the Registrant requests it, the Administration will assign the case to a Confidential Intermediary. The CI is selected based on the type of adoption: private child placement agency, local department of social services, or private attorney.

The Registrant and CI will be notified of the assignment in writing. The Registrant and CI then will complete a Service Agreement to outline the requested services. If the adoption occurred through a private child placement agency that offers CI services, there may be a fee for CI services. The fees are addressed in the Service Agreement. Search services will not begin until the signed Service Agreement is received.

The Confidential Intermediary will work to identify and locate the requested birth relatives and determine their willingness to have contact. If all parties are open to communication, the CI will assist in arranging and facilitating that contact.

There is no guarantee that the person sought, or the information being requested, will be found. Additionally, even if located, the person may not wish to establish contact or participate in a reunion. While these services may not always result in a reunion, they can provide valuable information, such as medical history, to adult adoptees and birth families.