Open Adoption Is Based on the Needs of the Adopted Child

Brenda Romanchik

Brenda Romanchik is a birth mother whose son was placed in a fully open adoption when he was born. In this viewpoint, she explains that open adoption is based on the needs of the adopted child. She describes adoptions wherein the birth parents share information with the adoptive parents as semi-open adoptions. Rather than semi-open adoption, Romanchik recommends fully open adoption, which is based on the needs of the child and gives the child an opportunity to have a relationship with his or her birth parents in addition to the relationship with adoptive parents. She compares open adoption to a marriage, where a spouse accepts a relationship with his or her in-laws because they are an important part of who his or her spouse is.

Ask five people what their definition of open adoption is and you are likely to get five answers. Some may think that allowing an expectant parent to choose the prospective adoptive parents from a profile of non-identifying information is an open adoption. Still others may say that those who met prior to placement and who exchange pictures and letters after the child is placed in the adoptive home are participating in an open adop-
tion. This definition is, in fact, a variation of a semi-open adoption or openness in adoption.

So what is an open adoption? The primary difference between a truly open adoption and a semi-open adoption is that [in the former] the adopted child has the potential of developing a one-on-one relationship with his or her birth family. It is not about the adoptive parents bestowing birth parents with the privilege of contact, nor is it about birth parents merely being available to provide information over the years. Direct contact, in the form of letters, phone calls and visits between the birth family and the adopted child, along with his [or her] adoptive family, is essential if they are to establish their own relationship. After all, how can we honestly call an adoption open if the child is not involved?

*Children entertain their adoptive parents. In an open adoption the child has the potential of developing a relationship with his or her birth family.*