

# SEND THIS ADOPTION STYLEBOOK TO YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER!

More than 100 adoption groups, professionals, and individuals have signed a letter drafted by the Accurate Adoption Reporting group to the editor of the Associated Press stylebook, used by journalists around the country, and to the editors of stylebooks used by a wide range of other publications, asking them to add an entry on adoption in stylebooks. "Through their word choices, even well-meaning journalists can inadvertently convey the misconception that adoptive families are somehow less genuine and permanent, and that people who were adopted—and their role in a family—remain somehow different. A stylebook entry on adoption would help journalists use language that conveys the fact that adoptive families are just like any other, both in law and in loving relationships." A copy of the suggested stylebook is below. We urge you to send it to your local newspaper editor.

## SUGGESTED ADOPTION STYLEBOOK

☛ As with race or gender, the fact that a person was adopted should be mentioned only if it's essential to the story. If it is used, its relevance should be made clear. A daughter who joined the family through adoption is—and should be described as—simply a daughter.

If it is relevant to mention adoption, we suggest past tense phrasing such as: "She was adopted in 1997" rather than "She is adopted." Adoption is one of many events in a person's past, not an immutable personal trait.

☛ An adopted person's parents should be referred to simply as father, mother, or parents. The man and woman who shared in the child's conception can be referred to as the birth-, genetic or biological parents (not "real" or "natural" parents).

☛ Writers should avoid terms such as "abandoned" or "given up." It is usually inaccurate to refer to children avail-

able for adoption as "orphans." Often, their birthparents are alive. Nor should children be referred to as "unwanted." It is better to say that birthparents placed the child for adoption, made an adoption plan, or transferred parental rights.

☛ The reasons that people adopt are rarely relevant. To suggest or say that parents "couldn't have a baby of their own" is inaccurate. Adoption is not second best. Children who join families through adoption are their parents "own" by law and by love.

☛ Stories should not portray adoptive parents as unusually selfless or saintly. In most cases, families adopt because they want to be parents and are no more saintly or selfless than other parents.

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