Fostering or Adopting a Child with FASD

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has issued a set of guidelines for those who are considering fostering or adopting a child with FASD. Those guidelines include:

1. Work with informed professionals in quality adoption agencies
2. Explore your feelings about alcohol and drug abuse, particularly among pregnant women
3. Discuss the child’s background with your social worker so that you have a realistic picture of the birth parent’s substance use and related lifestyle
4. Ask for written summaries of the child’s diagnoses, medical complications, treatment services, and necessary followup care
5. Ask for information on services and resources to meet the child’s needs, including eligibility for adoption subsidies and Medicaid
6. Find out how to reduce the impact of the child’s biological risks by providing a nurturing, responsive, and healthy caregiving environment
7. Recognize that you must be prepared and able to tolerate the uncertainties that are part of adopting a child prenatally exposed to alcohol or other drugs
8. Resist negative stereotypes of children prenatally exposed to drugs or alcohol, which ignore the individuality of each child and the role of a healthy environment
9. Recognize the importance of timely identification of problems and early intervention.
For more information on fostering or adopting a child with FASD, please visit the SAMHSA FASD Center for Excellence at www.fasdcenter.samhsa.gov or see Edelsteins’ 1995 book entitled “Children with Prenatal Alcohol and/or Other Drug Exposure: Weighing the Risks of Adoption.”

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