



First/Birth Parents at Pact Family Camp

Pact welcomes birth/first parents—traditionally the most marginalized members of the adoption triad—not just as guest speakers but also as guests, counselors and staff in our entire Family Camp program. The participation of first/birth parents provides ground-breaking opportunities for connections between first families, adoptive/foster parents, adopted/fostered youth, and adoption professionals. Many adoptive parents report that getting to know the first/birth parents who attend Pact Family Camp has challenged them to rethink their assumptions about their own children’s first/birth families and about ongoing contact.

Pact Family Camp has proactively included first/birth parents since 2010, and a growing number are attending each year. Some come with their children and their children’s adoptive families, others come on their own. First/birth parents are invited to participate in all of the adult programming (keynote presentations, panel discussions, workshops, etc.). While most of these presentations are designed with adoptive parents as the primary target audience, explorations of the experience of adoption are illuminating to first/birth parents as well, and the presence of first/birth parents deepens the discussions and adds an important perspective.

We know that the first/birth parents who attend Pact Family Camp care deeply about our mission – to serve adopted children of color. We also know that topics of adoption and family, as well as oppression, race and culture, are sensitive, volatile subjects; we want to make sure that you are not being asked to educate adoptive parents or share your experience with adoptees if that is not your desire. Of course, we invite people to reach across triad and racial lines as they choose, but we acknowledge the power dynamics when first/birth parents are in a very small minority. Pact is committed to Camp being not only a “brave space,” but also a safe space for first/birth parents.

Because we understand that the environment can be emotionally triggering, we have a special program offering first/birth parents the opportunity to create their own community within the larger Camp. We offer the opportunity to attend a Pact-sponsored first/birth parents’ dinner offsite, and we provide staff to facilitate conversations daily and offer support during Camp.

First/Birth Parents can attend camp in the following ways:

1. **Camper:** Register as a single adult (or family) using the regular registration process and paying the full Camp fee for your income level. This registration will provide you your own private housing.
2. **Camp Counselor:** First/birth parents are invited to apply to be counselors in our youth program. We consider you to be great role models for children and would love to have your participation in this way if you are interested and have experience working with youth.
3. **Camper w/ Scholarship:** [Apply for a scholarship](#) to attend Camp. We have a limited amount of funds designated to ensure that First/Birth Parents who cannot afford to attend Camp may do so. This application, like the ones adoptive families are asked to complete, will ask questions regarding your income, and what you can afford to contribute toward your attendance. Housing will be in a shared townhouse with other first/birth parents. Each participant will have their own bed, but may have a roommate. **Funding is limited and scholarships will be given on a first come first serve basis.**