

Evaluation of the information provision of Bureau VIA to the prospective parents of an adoptive child

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Summary

The Ministry of Justice (WODC) has commissioned IVA Tilburg to analyse the quality of the information-programme developed for prospective parents of an adoptive child. This programme is executed by Bureau VIA (2). The research has been carried out from August 2001 to August 2002. The research goal was to evaluate the programme in its process of information transfer and its outcomes, and to make recommendations for improvement.

The researchers have applied several techniques. Before enrolling in the programme, the parents-to-be were asked about their expectations. In addition, participants of the programme, both prospective parents and parents who had already adopted a child, were asked for their opinion on the programme. They were also questioned about changes in their attitudes towards adoption and their opinions on adoption before and after participation in the programme. Furthermore, professionals who work with parents of adopted children, were asked for their opinions on the programme and for comments given by the parents they work with.

The researchers had to take into account some limitations. Prospective parents of adopted children were less willing to cooperate than expected. Another limitation was that the parents were asked about their *opinions* on adoption, whereas change in behaviour was not measured objectively. In addition, some of the parents were asked for their opinion on the programme after they had already adopted a child, which might have influenced their opinion.

Results

The main conclusion of the research is that the information programme does meet participants' expectations and that participants indicate to benefit from the programme.

The programme does not influence the decision of prospective parents whether or not to adopt a child. However, the programme enables them to make a well thought-out choice.

Before participation in the programme the prospective parents have high expectations of the information they will receive. Although these expectations are not always met, most participants were informed to their satisfaction.

During the programme, different techniques and materials are used to give information. Virtually all these techniques and materials are well received, as well as the organisation of the programme.

The participants feel that the information given prepares them well for the future adulthood of their adoptive child. As a result, they feel better equipped to assess the consequences of adoption for themselves and for the adoptive child. They know better what it means to raise an adoptive child. Furthermore, the programme has pointed them into the direction of the professional assistance available for parents raising an adoptive child.

Notwithstanding the benefits of the programme, the participants have made some suggestions for improvement. They would like to learn more about experiences of parents who already adopted a child. They also want to hear more about the positive sides of adoption. Finally, they would like to be better informed about adoption supporting organisations and about practical issues concerning adoption.

(1) Authors are employed by IVA Tilburg, Institute for Social Research

(2) On January 2002, 'Bureau VIA' was renamed 'Stichting Adoptievoorzieningen.' Here we use its former name, Bureau VIA, as the parents who cooperated as respondents know the bureau by this name.