

§ 48-10-103. Lawful payments related to adoption.

(a) An adoptive parent, or another person acting on behalf of an adoptive parent, may pay the reasonable and actual fees and expenses for:

- (1) Services of an agency in connection with an adoption;
- (2) Medical, hospital, nursing, pharmaceutical, traveling, or other similar expenses incurred by a mother or her child incident to the pregnancy and birth or any illness of the adoptee;
- (3) Counseling services for a parent or the adoptee that are directly related to the adoption and are provided by a licensed psychiatrist, licensed psychologist, licensed marriage and family therapist, licensed clinical mental health counselor, licensed or certified social worker, fee-based practicing pastoral counselor or other licensed clinical mental health counselor, or an employee of an agency;
- (4) Ordinary living expenses of a mother during the pregnancy and for no more than six weeks after the birth;
- (5) Expenses incurred in ascertaining the information required under G.S. 48-3-205 about an adoptee and the adoptee's biological family;
- (6) Legal services, court costs, and traveling or other administrative expenses connected with an adoption, including any legal service connected with the adoption performed for a parent who consents to the adoption of a minor or relinquishes the minor to an agency; and
- (7) Preparation of the preplacement assessment and the report to the court.

(b) A birth parent, or another person acting on the parent's behalf, may receive or accept payments authorized in subsection (a) of this section; or a provider of a service listed in subsection (a) of this section may receive or accept payments for that service.

(c) A payment authorized by subsection (a) of this section may not be made contingent on the placement of the minor for adoption, relinquishment of the minor, consent to the adoption, or cooperation in the completion of the adoption. Except as provided in subsection (d) of this section, if the adoption is not completed, a person who has made payments authorized by subsection (a) of this section may not recover them; but neither is this person liable for any further payment unless the person has agreed in a signed writing with a provider of a service to make this payment regardless of the outcome of the proceeding for adoption.

(d) A prospective adoptive parent may seek to recover a payment if the parent or other person receives or accepts it with the fraudulent intent to prevent the proposed adoption from being completed.

(e) An agency may charge or accept a reasonable fee or other compensation from prospective adoptive parents. In assessing a fee or charge, the agency may take into account the income of adoptive parents and may use a sliding scale related to income in order to provide services to persons of all incomes. (1975, c. 335, s. 1; 1991, c. 335, s. 1; 1993, c. 539, ss. 412, 1264; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1995, c. 457, s. 2; 2001-487, s. 40(c); 2019-240, s. 3(b).)