

Domestic Adoption

Types of Domestic Adoptions:

State Foster Care Adoptions: *(See Foster Care Informational Sheet)*

Can adopt from birth to age 18

Agency Adoptions: An agency child adoption occurs when the placement is arranged through a licensed child adoption agency. This is the most mainstream choice for Domestic Adoptions.

Private Adoptions: A private child adoption occurs when the placement of the child is arranged through a private individual, often an attorney, physician, friend, or adoption facilitator. Often considerably more expensive than Agency Adoptions.

Domestic Adoption Information:

Of non-stepparent adoptions each year, approximately:

- 59 percent are from the child welfare system *(state foster care system)*
- 15 percent of domestic infants
- 26 percent from international

Agency Adoptions offer adoptions through all 50 states. Most states make the adoptive parents wait 7-10 days after birth before they can take the child home.

Costs:

Private Adoptions: Varies by situation, lawyer fees, etc...

State Adoption: Cheapest Form of Domestic Adoption - can be as low as \$1000

Agency Adoption: Depending on Agency and Fees - Approximately \$15,000-\$35,000
(Usually based on Total Household Income)

Suggested Questions for Domestic Adoption Agency Selection

The following is a list of suggested questions that are designed to help families in selecting an adoption agency for a domestic adoption. Use of an adoption agency is only one of several different means of pursuing adoption, but is a commonly used and often beneficial approach for many families.

General Questions About the Agency:

- What are the agency's requirements for adoptive families (e.g., age, marital status, number of children already in the home, religious, criminal background, financial, health considerations)?
- How long has the agency been licensed? How long has the agency been in operation?
- Is the agency a non-profit or for-profit organization? If a for-profit organization, who owns the agency?
- Does the agency have any religious or denominational affiliation?

Questions About Fees and Costs:

- What fees and costs are charged by the agency in connection with the adoption process and when are they due?
- What costs and expenses will likely be incurred in addition to the agency's fees and costs (i.e., home study expenses, legal expenses, filing and processing expenses, etc.)?

Questions About Wait Time:

- What is the current estimated wait time for families? How many families are currently waiting? Note: Wait times at most agencies are often highly dependent on the adoptive family's parameters (e.g., age, gender, racial/ethnic and health factors that the adoptive family is willing to consider). To the extent that an adoptive family has already determined certain of its fundamental parameters, questions regarding wait times should be asked in specific relation to those parameters (e.g., what is the estimated wait time for an infant girl).
- What is the longest wait time for any of the families that are currently waiting?
- Have average wait times for families increased, decreased or remained generally the same over the past several years (and if they have increased or decreased, why)?
- How often should I expect to hear from the agency workers during the waiting process?

Questions About the Agency's Previous Placement Experience:

- How many children has the agency placed in each of the past five years?
- What number of failed adoption placements has the agency experienced in each of the past five years (i.e., how many instances of a family being matched with a child but such match did not result in a final adoption)?
- How does the agency handle failed placements (e.g., where on the wait list is a family that has experienced a failed placement placed, are there any additional fees or costs imposed, etc.)?

Questions About the Agency's Matching and Placement Process:

- What information does the adoptive family know about birthparent(s) and vice versa? How does the agency define terms such as "open" adoption and "semi-open" adoption?
- What degree of ongoing contact and/or communication between birthparent(s) and adoptive family/child does the agency require, promote or allow?
- What role does the agency play in facilitating ongoing contact and/or communication between birthparent(s) and adoptive family/child?
- How does the agency's matching process work? How are birthparents and adoptive parents matched?
- If adopting an infant, how involved is the adoptive family with the birthparent(s) prior to the baby being born?
- If adopting a newborn, when is the baby generally placed with the adoptive family?

Questions About Services Provided by the Agency:

- What pre-placement training does the agency offer to adoptive families?
- What other support services does the agency provide (e.g., support groups, social events, newsletters, etc.)?
- What post-placement services for adoptive families are provided?
- What help or services are available for adoptive families experiencing post-placement challenges and difficulties relating to their adoption?
- If adopting an infant, how involved is the adoptive family with the birthparent(s) prior to the baby being born?
- What counseling and support services do the birthparent(s) receive both prior to and after the adoption?

Disclaimer: This document is not intended to constitute, nor does it represent, legal advice of any kind. A qualified attorney should be consulted with respect to any legal questions or issues.