

NCFE A ON TOPIC:

DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION

What is domestic infant adoption?

Adoption is the legal process by which parental rights and responsibilities are transferred from one parent or set of parents to another, with the purpose of ensuring that the child placed for adoption has all the benefits of a loving, permanent family if his or her birthparents choose to make an adoption plan. In a domestic infant adoption, both the child to be adopted and his or her potential adoptive parent(s) are citizens and residents of the same country.

What does NCFE believe about domestic infant adoption?

National Council For Adoption believes that infant adoption can be a positive option for children as well as expectant parents facing an unintended pregnancy. Expectant parents may choose to make an adoption plan as one way of ensuring that their child has a stable, loving, and permanent family. NCFE believes that accurate adoption information should be included as part of a complete options counseling program, and that expectant parents considering adoption have the right to receive knowledgeable, professional counseling both before and after an adoption takes place. We advocate for pre-adoption education for prospective adoptive parents and post-adoption support services to help adoptive families thrive once a child is placed in their homes.

How does domestic infant adoption work?

The first focus of an adoption is to ensure that a child has a safe, loving family to call his or her own. In domestic infant adoption, expectant parents make an adoption plan for their child and parental rights of a child are transferred to adoptive parents. A basic outline of what the process looks like for expectant and adoptive parents is provided below.

EXPECTANT PARENTS/BIRTH PARENTS

1. **OPTIONS COUNSELING:** Information should be provided to expectant parents about all pregnancy options, including adoption. Resources about adoption, including referral information for local adoption professionals, should be readily available.
2. **REFERRAL:** An adoption agency, social worker, or attorney who specializes in adoption can give you more information about the



National Council
For Adoption

THE FACTS

133,737

U.S. DOMESTIC ADOPTIONS IN 2007

57,248

ADOPTIONS BY RELATIVES

76,489

UNRELATED ADOPTIONS

32,404

SPECIAL NEEDS ADOPTIONS

18,078

DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTIONS

Source: P. Placek, "National Adoption Data Assembled by the National Council For Adoption." Adoption Factbook V. 2011 AdoptionCouncil.org/resources/adoption-factbook

adoption process and provide counseling to help expectant parents consider whether an adoption plan is the best option for them.

3. **MAKING AN ADOPTION PLAN:** Expectant parents should think about the type of adoption they would prefer, and receive counseling and information to help them decide what degree of openness they would like in their adoption, the traits they want their child's adoptive parent(s) to possess, and details about their birth and hospital experience.
4. **CHOOSING ADOPTIVE PARENTS:** In an open adoption, expectant parents considering adoption will view profiles of qualified adoptive parents and can ask to talk with them on the phone or meet in person. In confidential adoptions, expectant parents can ask their agency to choose a qualified family based on their preferences.
5. **BIRTH:** The mother gives birth, and the child is generally placed in the care of the adoptive family upon leaving the hospital. Sometimes a mother might request additional time with her child after her hospital stay is completed.
6. **RELINQUISHMENT/CONSENT:** Birth parents sign documents legalizing the adoption plan and transferring parental rights to the adoptive parents.
7. **POST-ADOPTION:** Birth parents should continue to receive counseling after the adoption. Depending on the degree of openness chosen, birth parents may continue to have a relationship with the child and the adoptive parents. The vast majority of domestic infant adoptions in the U.S. now have some degree of openness/contact between birth parents, children, and adoptive families.

PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS (PAPS)

1. **CONTACT:** PAPS contact an agency or social worker to gather more information so they can decide whether or not to pursue adoption. They might attend information sessions or have an introductory meeting with agency staff.
2. **APPLICATION AND HOMESTUDY:** Application paperwork is completed, and a homestudy is conducted to gather legal, financial, and psychological information about the adoptive parents in order to determine whether they can care for a child.
3. **CREATE A PROFILE:** Approved prospective adoptive parents create a profile for expectant parents to review and consider whether they would be a good match for a potential adoptive placement.
4. **MATCHED:** Expectant parents making an adoption plan (or sometimes the agency) choose potential adoptive parents for the child.
5. **BIRTH:** The expectant mother gives birth, and usually at that time or very shortly after the child is placed with the adoptive parents with the birth parents' consent.

THE FACTS

1%

OF PREGNANT UNMARRIED
WOMEN CHOOSE ADOPTION
(APPROX.)

2/3

OF AMERICANS HAVE A
PERSONAL CONNECTION
WITH ADOPTION

Source: National Adoption Survey, 2002

7%

OF AMERICANS ARE ADOPTED
(APPROX.)

Source: National Adoption Information
Clearinghouse, 2004

4 in 10

AMERICANS HAVE
CONSIDERED ADOPTING

Source: Dave Thomas Foundation for
Adoption, 2010

6. **PLACEMENT:** The child lives with the adoptive parents while the legal process is finalized and supervisory visits are made by the adoption agency.
7. **FINALIZATION:** The adoption is finalized when the court transfers full parental rights to the adoptive parents and creates a new birth certificate listing them as the legal parents.

Where can I learn more?

EXPECTANT PARENTS

iChooseAdoption.org

NCFA's awareness campaign to help inform those facing an unintended pregnancy with basic information about the option of adoption.

ImPregnant.org

A resource for women facing unintended pregnancy, which includes information on all pregnancy options.

FOR EXPECTANT PARENTS CONSIDERING ADOPTION AND BIRTH PARENTS

ChildWelfare.gov/adoption/birth/for/plan.cfm

Information for those considering an adoption plan.

Adoptioncouncil.org/publications/2011/11/adoption-advocate-no-41

One birthmother's story of her open adoption : *Adoption Advocate* No. 41 – My Perspective on Open Adoption and Recommendations for Birthparents

Adoptioncouncil.org/publications/2012/10/adoption-advocate-no-52

On the rights of expectant parents considering adoption in the hospital, during and after birth: *Adoption Advocate* No. 52 – Educating Hospitals About Adoption: How Hospital Staff Can Support Parents Considering an Adoption Plan.

Adoptioncouncil.org/who-we-are/member-agencies

Nationwide directory of NCFA's member agencies

ADOPTIVE PARENTS

AdoptionCouncil.org/for-families/for-families.html

NCFA's resources for families

AdoptionCouncil.org/who-we-are/agency-map.html

Nationwide directory of NCFA's member agencies

AdoptionCouncil.org/for-families/financial-resources.html

Financial resources to help fund your adoption.

IAATP.com/resource

Adoption resources and state laws.

THE FACTS

78%

BELIEVE THAT THE U.S.
SHOULD DO MORE TO
PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE
ADOPTION

Source: Dave Thomas Foundation for
Adoption, 2010

\$7K-40K

COST OF A DOMESTIC INFANT
ADOPTION IN THE U.S.