



Answers to your questions about adoption

This information is available in other forms to people with disabilities by contacting us at (651) 431-4671 (voice). TTY/TDD users can call the Minnesota Relay at 711 or (800) 627-3529. For the Speech-to-Speech Relay, call (877) 627-3848.



P *People have many questions about adoption. This booklet provides some answers about adoption procedures to birth parents and adoptive parents. It also includes a list of licensed adoption agencies and other organizations that support adoption in Minnesota. County social service agencies and licensed adoption agencies can provide more specific information about adoption.*

Adoption in Minnesota

What is adoption?

Adoption is the legal and social means by which children become members of families other than their birth families. Adoptive parents have all the rights and responsibilities of parents.

Through adoption, children receive families of their own. Today, more “openness” in planning adoption often lets birth parents take part in the adoption placement process as fully as possible.

Who are the children?

Children who need adoptive families live in all 50 states and in other countries. They come from all racial and ethnic groups and range in age from infants to teenagers. The children are:

- Infants whose birth parents make an adoptive plan
- Children who come under state guardianship
- Children adopted from countries outside the United States.

Who are children under state guardianship?

Many children with special needs are under state guardianship because a court terminated their birth parents' rights. They often need medical, educational and/or psychological help to meet their unique needs. Parents who adopt children with special needs may receive financial assistance to help meet the children's needs. For more information on the adoption assistance program or about children under state guardianship who are waiting for adoption, contact a licensed adoption agency, county social services agency or the Minnesota Adoption Resource Network. See the back of this booklet for telephone numbers and addresses.

How do children become free for adoption?

Children become free for adoption through specific legal procedures which are different in every state. In Minnesota, children are freed for adoption when their birth parents sign a voluntary consent to the adoption. Birth parents have a short period of time to change their minds after signing consents. Children may also become free for adoption through a voluntary or involuntary court procedure to end parental rights. Birth parents have a short period of time to appeal a court's order.

Why is special preparation needed?

Individuals interested in adopting children need special family preparation because adoption is a legal process with great psychological, emotional and cultural impact. Adopted children's understanding of the meaning of adoption becomes more complex as they grow to maturity. Adoptive parents need to understand and address their children's unfolding understanding of adoption. Additionally, the concerns of birth parents must also be recognized. All this adds an extra dimension to parenting and must be understood by prospective adoptive parents.



What is an adoption agency's role?

Adoption agencies are licensed to provide certain services required by law. These include completing an adoption study and witnessing the birth parents' consent to an adoption. Agencies also provide a variety of adoption-related services which:

- Help birth parents look at their choices and carry out an adoption plan
- Facilitate the adoption of children
- Provide education about adoption and raising adopted children
- Provide support, education and consultation after adoption is complete.

What is the difference between agency and direct adoption placements?

Agency placements are those in which an adoption agency places children with prospective adoptive parents and later consents to adoptions. The adoption agency places children as the court-appointed guardian or with permission from birth parents.

Direct or independent adoption placements are those in which prospective adoptive parents, with the agreement of birth parents, obtain a court pre-adoptive custody order. The birth parents may then place their children with prospective adoptive parents.



Can a baby be placed in an adoptive home directly from the hospital?

Yes. Birth parents may place a baby with an adoptive family directly from the hospital if prospective parents have a pre-adoptive custody order. Until the birth parents' consent to adoption becomes irrevocable, both birth and prospective adoptive parents face some risks. Birth and prospective adoptive parents should be aware of these risks before deciding if direct placement from the hospital or temporary foster care is right for them. If children are from another state, the requirements of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) applies. The state to which the child is going must first approve an adoption placement.

What is the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children?

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children is an agreement among all 50 states that requires states to follow certain procedures before placing children across state lines for adoption. The ICPC protects children, birth and prospective adoptive parents because it:

- Makes sure the laws of both states are followed
- Makes sure that children are legally free for adoption
- Requires that medical and social information on children is given to the adopting family
- Makes sure that someone in the sending state is legally responsible for children until the adoptions are final
- Requires the approval of authorities in the state where children will be adopted before children can be brought into that state.

What does adoption cost?

Adoptive parents may pay:

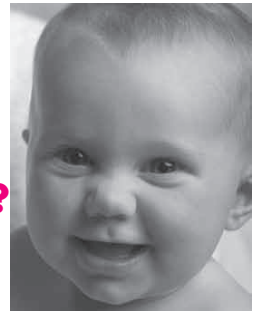
- Fees for agency services
- Certain birth parent expenses
- Legal fees and court costs related to adoption
- Fees to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS)
- Fees to people or agencies related to international adoption
- Travel costs.

Adoptive parents may be eligible for a federal tax credit for adoption. Parents adopting children under state guardianship do not pay any fees for agency services and will be reimbursed for out-of-pocket costs up to \$2,000.

For more information contact the Minnesota Adoption Resource Network at 612/861-7115 or your county social service agency.



Birth Parents: Placing children for adoption



What services do adoption agencies provide to birth parents?

Licensed adoption agencies may provide some of the following services to birth parents:

- Counseling and information about adoption options
- Help with prenatal care, housing, finances and education
- Information on adoptive parents from a list of waiting families
- Help with the adoption process if a prospective adoptive family was chosen before the agency was contacted.

Some agencies limit birth parents' services to facilitating the adoption of their children. Others may offer more services during pregnancy and after adoption. Birth parents should discuss their specific needs with adoption agencies before working with them.

What are birth fathers' rights?

Birth fathers may have legal rights to consent or object to an adoption. Birth fathers, who meet certain legal standards, must consent to adoption or receive notice of an adoption hearing. Birth fathers who do not meet legal criteria must indicate their interest to assert their rights by registering on the Father's Adoption Registry within 30 days of the child's birth. If they do not, an adoption may take place without their knowledge or consent.

For more information on the Father's Adoption Registry, contact the Minnesota Department of Health.

Can birth parents choose adoptive parents?

Yes, birth parents are encouraged to participate in the selection of adoptive parents when working with a licensed adoption agency. Birth parents may also select adoptive parents whom they meet through other resources. It is important that birth parents consider the values, beliefs and environment they want their children to grow up with before identifying prospective adoptive parents.



Adoptive parents: Bringing children into your family



What is an adoption home study?

An adoption home study is an opportunity for adoptive parents to explore the realities of adoption, including what to expect during the adoption process; the type of children, including those with special needs, the family is interested in parenting; issues involving birth parents; and other information to prepare families for adoption. Although it may seem somewhat uncomfortable, an adoption home study is designed to help prospective adoptive parents explore all issues related to adoption.

Is an adoption home study required by a court?

Yes. Adoption is a legal procedure that creates a parent-child relationship where none existed before. A court needs to know that adoptive parents understand and can meet the needs of children. The adoption home study provides much of the information needed by the court. Adoption home studies are required in both international and United States adoptions.

What should adoptive parents know about children they adopt?

Adoptive parents need to know as much as possible about children's health history, and the health and social history of birth parents and their extended families. This information may be important for diagnosis and treatment of mental health and/or medical problems. It may help in understanding children's personality traits and mannerisms. The information will also become an important part of adopted children's appreciation of who they are.

Adoption agencies help birth parents record health, genetic and social information, which is passed on to their children's adoptive parents. However, the accuracy and thoroughness of the information depends on birth parents. Since information that is not collected before the adoption may not be available in the future, prospective adoptive parents should ask for all the information that can be obtained when children are placed in their family.

Can birth and adoptive parents arrange an adoption?

Yes. Prospective adoptive parents often learn about birth parents who are considering placement of their children for adoption. If that happens, birth and prospective adoptive parents should contact a licensed adoption agency or attorney. The process of obtaining an adoption home study, making an informed decision to place a child for adoption, and collecting health and social information takes time. Beginning the process as soon as possible helps with both agency and direct adoption planning.

How long does it take to complete an adoption?

An adoption is usually finalized between three months and one year after children are placed with adoptive parents. In Minnesota, unless waived by a court, an adoption petition may not be granted until children have been in an adoptive home for three months. The time between placement and completion of an adoption is an opportunity for adoptive parents and children to adjust to each other.

What happens if a family moves to another state before an adoption is final?

If children are already in an adoptive home, a family needs to keep the supervising adoption or county agency up to date on plans for moving. Sometimes the court can finalize the adoption before the move. Otherwise, an agency needs time to make arrangements through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children for the families move to a new state.



Adopted people: Learning more about adoption

When should children be told about adoption?

Most adoption experts believe children are better off growing up knowing they are adopted. However, children's understanding of what adoption means is directly related to their age and stage of cognitive and social development. Deal with adoption questions and issues in an age-appropriate manner.

Can adopted people learn the identity of their birth parents?

Yes. When adoptive parents and birth parents agree, they can share identifying information any time before or after an adoption. People adopted after August 1, 1982, can get identifying information if the birth parents did not file a written refusal with an adoption agency or the Minnesota Department of Health, Division of Vital Statistics. For more details, read the Minnesota Department of Human Services brochure, *Post Adoption Search*.



Licensed adoption agencies

The following agencies are licensed in Minnesota to place children for adoption. Licensure means an agency meets minimum standards for child placement. Agencies vary in their philosophy, requirements, types of children placed, program services and fees so prospective adoptive parents are encouraged to choose an agency that best meets their needs.

Adoption Miracle International

19108 Kingswood Terrace
Minnetonka, MN 55435
(952) 470-6141

African American Adoption Agency

2356 University Ave., Suite 220
St. Paul, MN 55114
(651) 659-0460

Bethany Christian Services

3025 Harbor Lane, Suite #223
Plymouth, MN 55447
(763) 553-0344

Caritas Family Services

157 Roosevelt Road #200
St. Cloud, MN 56301
(320) 252-4121

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis

1276 University Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104-4101
(651) 641-1180

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Winona

111 Market Street, P.O. Box 379
Winona, MN 55987-0379
(507) 454-2270

Child Link International

6508 Stevens Avenue
Richfield, MN 55423
(612) 861-9048

Children's Home Society & Family Services

1605 Eustis Street
St. Paul, MN 55108-1219
(651) 646-7771

Christian Family Life Services

203 South Eighth Street
Fargo, ND 58103
(701) 237-4473

Chosen Ones Adoption Agency

1622 East Sandhurst Drive
Maplewood, MN 55109
(651) 770-5508

Crossroads, Inc.

4620 West 77th Street, Suite 105
Minneapolis, MN 55435
(952) 831-5707

Downey Side of Minnesota

400 Sibley Street, Suite 560
St. Paul, MN 55101
(651) 228-0117

European Children's Adoption Services

6050 Cheshire Lane
Plymouth, MN 55446
(763) 694-6131

Family Focus

2331 University Ave SE, Suite 150
Minneapolis, MN 55414
(612) 331-4429

Family Resource
2903 Euclid Avenue
Anoka, MN 55303
(763) 422-8590

**Forever Families International
Adoption Agency**
898 Redhead Trail NW
Walker, MN 56484
(218) 836-2239

**Hand in Hand
International Adoptions**
Mailing address:
1360 University Avenue, #176
St. Paul, MN 55104
Office Address:
1076 Charles Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104
(651) 917-0384

Holy Family Adoption Agency
525 Thomas Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55103
(651) 298-0133

**Hope International
Family Services**
5850 Omaha Avenue North
Oak Park Heights, MN
55082-6349
(651) 439-2446

**International Adoption
Services, Inc.**
4940 Viking Drive, Suite 388
Edina, MN 55435
(952) 893-1343

LDS Social Services
6120 Earle Brown Drive, Suite 210
Brooklyn Center, MN 55430
(763) 560-0900

The Love Basket, Inc.
3902 Minnesota
Duluth, MN 55802
(218) 722-1189

**Lutheran Social Service
of Minnesota**
2414 Park Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
(612) 871-0221

New Horizons Adoption Agency
Highway 254, Box 623
Frost, MN 56033
(507) 878-3200

New Life Family Services
1515 E. 66th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55423-2674
(612) 866-7643

North Homes, Inc.
1880 River Rd
Grand Rapids, MN 55744
(218) 327-3055
Toll Free (888) 430-3055

PATH
2324 University Avenue West,
Suite#101
St. Paul, MN 55114
(651) 646-3221

**Permanent Family
Resource Center**
1220 Tower Road
Fergus Falls, MN 56537
(320) 998-3400

Reaching Arms International
3701 Winnetka Avenue North
New Hope, MN 55427
(763) 591-0791

**Summit Adoption Home
Studies, Inc.**
1389 Summit Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105
(651) 645-6657

Upper Midwest Indian Center
1035 West Broadway
Minneapolis, MN 55411
(612) 522-4436

Van Dyke Adoption Foundation
19750 Chartwell Hill
Shorewood, MN 55331
(952) 470-4138

**Wellspring Adoption Agency,
Inc.** 1219 University Avenue SE
Minneapolis, MN 55414
(612) 379-0980



Other sources of information about adoption

**Minnesota Adoption
Resource Network**
430 Oak Grove St., Suite 404
Minneapolis, MN 55403
(612) 861-7115

**North American Council on
Adoptable Children**
970 Raymond Ave., Suite 106
St. Paul, MN 55114-1149
(651) 644-3036

Other Minnesota Department of Human Services publications:

Post Adoption Search

Minnesota Adoption Assistance Program for Children with Special Needs

Completing an Adoption in Minnesota

These publications are online at www.dhs.state.mn.us
or contact:

Minnesota Department of Human Services
Child Safety and Permanency Division
PO Box 64944
St. Paul, MN 55164-0944
(651) 431-4656





Minnesota Department of **Human Services**
Child Safety and Permanency Division
PO Box 64944
St. Paul, MN 55164-0944