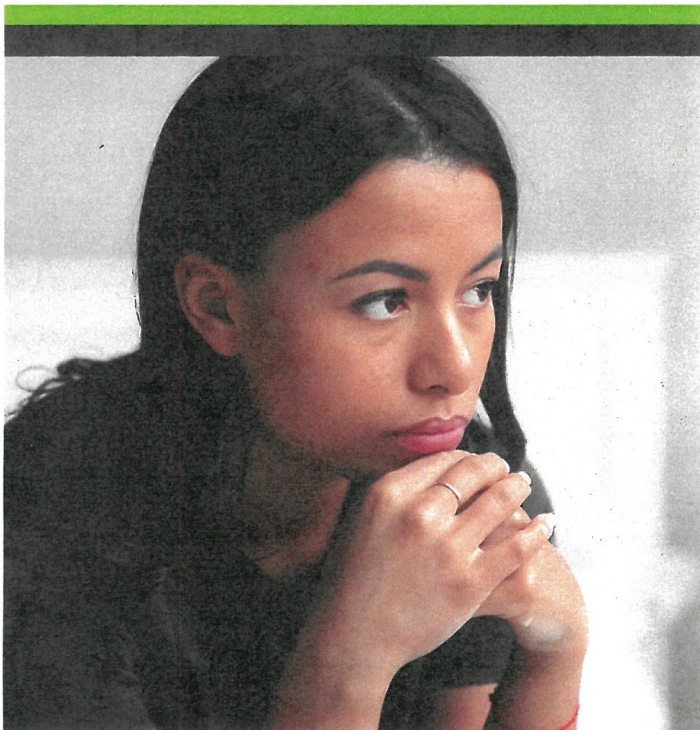


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WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE

# ADOPTION & YOU





# Adoption and You

If you are considering adoption, you are not alone. According to the United States Census, one out of every 30 families with children at home have an adopted child. In fact, about 1.5 million children under 18 in the US are adopted.<sup>1</sup>

## WHERE TO START?

The first thing to know is that you are in charge. You get to make the best decision for you and your child. Others around you should be helping you make a decision, not forcing you in any direction. Let those who are experienced give information and guidance, but, in the end, make sure the decision you make is best for you and your child.

## WHEN DO I HAVE TO DECIDE?

Most state laws require that the final decision to place a child for adoption be made after the baby is born. After consideration of your options, you may prepare for adoption by selecting a licensed adoption agency or adoption lawyer.



## THE ADOPTION AGENCY

Once you decide to look into adoption, you will want to find a good adoption agency. They should help guide you through the adoption process. On the back of this brochure are some questions you should ask of an adoption agency before deciding to use their services. If you are completing a private adoption, an adoption agency isn't necessary, but you should have an experienced adoption lawyer to help you through the process.

## WHO IS INVOLVED?

Adoption is a process involving many different players. First, and most important, there is you and your child. When it comes to adoption, there is no one right decision for everyone, so take your time thinking about what is best. It is best to have the father involved in most adoptions. Depending on the state you live in, it may be required by law. Your agency will help with this.

Second, as mentioned, there is normally an adoption agency involved. If you do use an agency try to pick one that has been around for many years and has a good reputation.

Third, there is the adopting family. In most adoptions you get to choose the adopting family through profiles and descriptions. You can choose the one you think is best for your child.

Finally, there are lawyers, counselors and judges that may be involved in the processes. These come into the picture a little later in the process, normally through your agency.

## STAYING IN TOUCH

Today, most domestic infant adoptions involve some level of "openness." Open adoption allows birth parents to know and have contact with the adoptive parents and the child who has been adopted. After the adoption, the birth mother (and possibly the birth father and other family members) and the adoptive family can communicate in various ways—letters, phone calls, social media, emails, texts, video calls, and/or visits. The type and frequency of communication will depend on the choices and needs of the people involved and often changes over time. Some states do not treat open adoption plans like a legally binding contract and the communication can be adjusted without legal intervention. Talk to your adoption lawyer or agency for details.

## WHAT IS NEXT?

The next step is to think, learn, and discuss. If you believe adoption is best for you and your child, speak to your advocate, counselor, or medical professional about the next steps. Adoption isn't right for everyone, but it may be right for you.







## Sample Questions to Ask an Adoption Agency Representative or an Adoption Lawyer<sup>4</sup>

If you are considering adoption as an option, talk to several agencies or lawyers and ask as many questions as you need to feel comfortable. Here are some questions to ask:

- What types of services do you offer, and what are the fees (if any)?
- Will I get counseling? During what time period? (Before the birth? After placement?)
- How will you handle obtaining the consent of the baby's father?
- Will you help pay expenses for medical care, housing, counseling, legal fees, or other?
- If I change my mind about the adoption, will I have to pay for services already received? (Note: this is illegal in most states)
- How do you find and screen possible adoptive parents?

- What role can I play in getting to know and selecting the family who will adopt my child?
- Can I receive ongoing information about my child or be able to have direct contact after placement (if I want that option)? What services do you provide to help us stay in touch?
- How would you handle the situation if my baby were born with a disability?
- Can you provide me with references (names and contact information) of clients whose children you placed for adoption and who have agreed to talk with women considering adoption?

### Sources:

1. Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2014). Are you pregnant and thinking about adoption? Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. Found at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f-pregna/> accessed 4/16/2018.
2. Kreider, Rose M., Lofquist, Daphne A. Population Characteristics, Adopted Children and Stepchildren: 2010. U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU. Table 12. Households by Child and Householder Relationship: 2010. Found at <https://www.census.gov/prod/2014pubs/p20-572.pdf> accessed 4/16/2018
3. Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2017). Consent to adoption. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. Accessed at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/consent/> on 4/16/2018.
4. Child Welfare, Are you pregnant and thinking about adoption?



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