

What's the Process?

The process of adoption, or how an adoption actually comes together, is impacted by a variety of factors. The type of adoption (domestic versus intercountry) as well as the origination of the adoption are some of the many factors that play a role in how an adoption plan unfolds. In addition, each state has different rules and regulations surrounding the requirements for adoption. The Child Welfare Information Gateway is an excellent resource for learning about the different state statutes that are applicable to adoption as well as federal regulations that may apply. Below we offer a general overview of some of the key steps/processes involved in how the adoption process typically works.

Options Counseling



Options Counseling is provided to an expectant parent(s) who is facing an unintended pregnancy and wishes to explore the options available to them. The ethical standard of care requires that women and men receive unbiased, non-coercive and comprehensive information on the full range of their options and available resources when facing a crisis pregnancy as well as an understanding of the lifelong impact to them and their families.

Home Study



An individual or couple seeking to adopt a child is required to have a home study, which is a comprehensive assessment of a variety of factors to ensure the safety and appropriateness of the home environment as well as to ensure the prospective adoptive parents have a full understanding of the many aspects and complexities of the adoption experience. Home study requirements vary by state.

Foster Placement



When the state child welfare agency has concerns that a child(ren) are unsafe in their current home environment, the state has the legal authority to assume custody of the child and place the child in an approved foster home. Typically, the initial goal is reunification with the child's first/birth parent(s). Time frames are imposed during which reunification efforts are implemented. If the state ultimately determines the child cannot safely return to the first/birth parent(s), parental rights are terminated and the child can legally be adopted. A child may be adopted by the foster parents who were temporarily caring for them, a relative, or a person to whom the child had no prior connection.

Adoption Placement



When a child is initially placed in an adoptive home there is typically a period of time prior to when the adoption can become finalized. This time frame differs by state as well as the origination of the adoption plan. At the conclusion of this period, provided no concerns exist by the supervising entity (either the placing agency or the child welfare agency) the adoptive parent(s) can commence to finalize the adoption which makes the relationship permanent and legally binding between the adoptive parents and the child(ren). An adoption is finalized in court by a Family Court Judge. Depending on each state's regulations, an attorney may or may not be used.