



AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE

Formerly *The American Fertility Society*

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PATIENT'S FACT SHEET: ADOPTION

Though medical treatment for infertility is an excellent choice for many infertile couples, not everyone who seeks treatment will become pregnant and deliver a child - even with the help of today's advanced reproductive technologies. Some couples choose to forego infertility treatment in favor of adoption, while others may decide to adopt after treatments have been unsuccessful. While not a cure for infertility, adoption ends childlessness and can be a satisfying means of building a family.

- Nearly 70,000 children are adopted in the United States each year, including 8,000 international children and 10,000 children with special emotional or physical needs.
- When deciding to adopt, couples should allow themselves time to accept their fertility-related losses before adopting.
- The option of adoption should be investigated early in the infertility evaluation, since the process can take several years and some agencies have parental age requirements.
- Adoptions may be arranged through an adoption agency or independently. Independent adoptions usually involve an adoption attorney or other intermediary such as a counselor, physician, or minister.
- Adoption laws vary significantly from state to state. Adopting between states is possible but more complex.
- Although confidential (anonymous) adoptions were once standard, open adoption, in which an exchange of information and contact occurs between the birth and adoptive parents, is steadily gaining acceptance and support.
- Keeping adoption a secret from an adopted child is generally not a good idea.
- Adoption costs vary widely. Public agency adoptions are often less expensive than private agency or independent adoptions, although private adoptions may take less time.
- All adoption fees, along with an explanation of the costs involved, should be obtained in writing prior to proceeding.
- Many employers provide parental leave for their employees and adoption should qualify for this benefit.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ADOPTION PROCESS

1) FORM AN ADOPTION PLAN

- Consider:**
- your reasons for adoption and the type of child you want to adopt (race, age, special needs).
 - the type of adoption you want to pursue (public or private agency, independent, international).
 - the degree of openness you want during the adoption process.

Gather/Read: all the information you can about adoption agencies, attorneys, support groups, and laws in your state. **Attend:** seminars and support groups. Ask questions of those who have adopted.

2) HOME STUDY/PARENT PREPARATION

A social worker will visit your home to meet you and your spouse and better assess you as potential adoptive parents (physically, emotionally, and financially). The social worker may also offer guidance in preparing your home for a new child.

3) IDENTIFICATION OF AN AVAILABLE CHILD

Informing family, neighbors, and others in your community that you want to adopt may assist you in your search.

4) PLACEMENT OF CHILD/FILING PETITION FOR ADOPTION

When the child is placed in your home, the agency/intermediary assists you in legally filing for adoption with the court.

5) POST-PLACEMENT FOLLOW-UP

A social worker will visit your home again after the child has been living there for a certain period of time.

6) FINAL HEARING

After the adoption petition has been filed, a court hearing is held to review your case and grant the final adoption decree.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Adoptive Families of America, 33 Highway 100 N., Minneapolis, MN 55422, (800)372-3300 (free "starter" kit).

American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, Box 33053, Washington, D.C. 20033-0053 (free directory).

North American Council on Adoptable Children, 1821 University Ave., # 498 N., St. Paul, MN 55104, (612)644-0336 (special needs).

RESOLVE, Inc., 1310 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02144, (617)623-0744 (support group).