

# A Guide to Adopting



The  
Orphan  
Foundation

[www.TheOrphanFoundation.org](http://www.TheOrphanFoundation.org)

*"Financial Support for Adopting Families"*

*Call us for additional  
information at:*

*(805) 823-3552*

## How to Begin

---

Educate yourself with the facts. Check your phone book's yellow pages, national directories of agencies, and the internet to identify licensed agencies. Find out the following information:

### Placements

How many domestic/international infants did the agency place for adoption last year?

### Research Agency Fees

Ask for a list of their fixed costs and those that are variable. Ask if the agency will provide a monthly itemized list of costs.

### Understand the Risks

Birthparents today choose their families from profiles. However, they can change their minds at any time before releasing their parental rights. Can you handle this possibility? Can you afford to risk some funds on a 75% chance of success? What happens to your investment if you should get pregnant after you have begun the adoption process?

### Who can apply/be approved?

Heterosexual married couples are eligible for most domestic programs. Agencies can specialize in certain types of programs, but in general, where you live, your religious background, your age, your income, and even your weight, are not disqualifiers for adoption. Of course, there are always exceptions that occur. For instance, China established age limitations and weight requirements in the recent past (if China is of interest to you, you can download their new restrictions from our site), but that just means you need to look elsewhere to adopt. There are over 500,000,000 orphaned children in the world who are looking for warm, loving parents just like you!

## Typical Domestic Adoption Process

---

### Consultation

This consultation is a sixty minute preliminary, private meeting with a supervisory staff member from the adoption agency, and includes information regarding available adoption resources and a review of important adoption issues. The agency's goal is to resolve any adoption questions or concerns you have before proceeding with the adoption process. Advice and individualized planning for successful adoption will be usually be given at the consultation and there will be a thorough explanation of agency policies and procedures.

### Home Study

Your home study is the screening and educational process that prepares and qualifies a family for adoption. In order to meet all standards of professional practice and legal/licensing regulations of the State serviced by your adoption agency, your home studies will be quite thorough but non-intrusive. Each agency charges a home study fee.

### Your Profile

The purpose of an adoptive family profile is to present a brief story about you and your family, so a birthparent will have a clear idea of who you are. The profile process is easy. Using the guidelines the agency provides, they can help you create a profile that is both attractive and individualized to your own personality and taste.

### Privately Arranged Adoption

Privately-arranged adoptions are also called designated, identified, or private adoptions. This type of adoption not only encourages pregnancy clients to choose adoption, but also speeds up placements for families. Private adoption accommodates the participation of trusted advisors such as clergy, physicians, and attorneys. Adoptive couples are also taught how to network and make contact with a birth parent. The expertise of your adoption agency, and the coordination of legal arrangements they provide on your behalf is the insurance that brings a proposed placement to actuality.

### Interstate Adoption

Some agencies provide interstate services which assist families in locating available children through an agency's affiliation with other networking agencies throughout America. Some agencies also provide placement planning, interstate contact procedures, and arrangement of birthparent services.

### Fee Information

Home study and supervision fees are standardized and highly competitive. All other services are itemized and are charged on actual time and expense basis. **In 2005, the average cost of all agency matched domestic adoptions was approximately \$19,180.** Because every adoption includes somewhat different situations with adoptive families and birth parents, it is impossible to give a definite amount.

## Domestic or International?

---

### Domestic Adoption

Couples often choose domestic infant adoption because they want to adopt a newborn infant. They appreciate the benefits of good prenatal care, medical and social background information, and the opportunity to get to know the birth parents on a semi-open basis. When making the decision, you should remember your success depends on a birth mother choosing you. Your age, the presence of other children in the home, and the employment of the mother can be negatives. On the positive side, most couples are linked with a birth mom in less than twelve months.

### International Adoption

International adoption is more predictable. There is no waiting for a birth mother to select you; there are plenty of children waiting for loving homes. You will have no involvement with birth parents—though often little or no social and medical background is available. You will need to be ready to travel, and you will incur higher fees. But you will have the satisfaction of adopting a child from an orphanage or foster care home who desperately needs a family to call their own. Single, heterosexual females are also welcome to adopt through most agencies' international programs.

## Semi-Open Adoption

---

What is semi-open adoption?

A semi-open adoption occurs when the birth mother, and/or other members of the birth family, meet and have interaction with the adoptive family. There is no identifying information exchanged (such as last names, place of residence) and the meetings are usually facilitated by the adoption agencies. After the baby is legally placed with the adoptive family, pictures and letters are exchanged on an agreed upon schedule. This communication is usually facilitated by the agency. In some cases there may be non-identifying e-mails or visits of the parties hosted by the caseworker.

What are the advantages of a semi-open adoption?

Advantages for Birth Parents:

- The birth mother has reduced uncertainty and fear of the placement.
- A birth mother receives a sense of comfort knowing that the child is being well-cared for by the family that SHE was able to chose.
- She can see how much the family loves the child through the pictures and letters that she receives.
- It helps to reduce the mourning process for the birth mother as she can deal with her grief of releasing the child knowing that he or she is happy, healthy, and loved.
- The birth mother is afforded a sense of control in the process by being able to choose the family.
- She will feel less guilt about her release because of the updates she receives.
- She will see all the opportunities the adoptive family is able to provide for the child.

Advantages for the Adoptive Family:

- A birth mother is more likely to proceed with the adoption plan when she is able to meet the family and get to know them.
- Meeting the birth mother helps reduce any fear that the family might have about the placement.
- The family is able to know the birth mother's intentions and understand her thoughts and feelings.
- The family will have the child's medical history.
- The family can confidently answer the child's questions about from where he or she came.
- The family can feel some affirmation at being chosen by the birth mother.
- The roles of all involved are clearly defined.

Advantages for the Adopted Child

- The child has access to information about his or her birth family through the agency.
- Information provided to the adoptive family can help answer questions like, "Where did I come from"?

- The child will not feel the necessity to “search” for the birth parents as he or she grows older.
- The child will be less likely to feel abandoned.
- The child can better understand the reasons his or her birth parents chose adoption.

## Frequently Asked Questions

---

### How would someone choose between domestic and international adoption?

When choosing between domestic and international adoption, one thing to consider is whether a family is willing to work with a birth mother. The amount of involvement with a birth mother or birth parents varies with each placement. However, many agency placements are semi-open, which allows for contact with the birth parents prior to the birth, and for the exchange of pictures and letters for up to 18 years.

Another consideration is travel. In order to adopt internationally, it is usually necessary for one or both parents to travel to the country from which they are adopting. Other considerations include cost, race of child, and age of child. In an international adoption, it would be highly unusual to get a newborn, Caucasian infant.

### What is the process, and how do I get started?

To get started, simply request an information packet from your agency. Included in a typical packet is a Preliminary Application, which you will submit to the agency to set-up an appointment to meet with the office supervisor for a consultation. Once the consultation takes place, here is a general idea of the steps taken:

- Submit a formal adoption application
- Attend an Adoption Awareness meeting
- Begin your home study process
- Complete your profile
- Become linked with a birth mother
- Temporary placement/host care
- Birth parent release hearing
- File Petition for Adoption
- Thirty day, three month, and six month post-placement visits
- Finalization of Adoption

### What is the time frame?

The agency will help you create a profile, or a synopsis of who you are, for a potential birth mother. Once your profile is active, most families are linked with a birth mother in less than twelve months. But since agencies do not have a "waiting list" because birth mothers choose the family themselves, it is very possible the wait to be linked could be as short as a few days, or longer than a year.

### [What is the cost for an adoption?](#)

In 2005, the average cost of all agency matched domestic adoptions was approximately \$19,180. Because every adoption includes somewhat different situations with adoptive families and birth parents, it is impossible to give a definite amount.

The fees required in an adoption may seem overwhelming at first, but broken down, and with the help of the \$10,000 U.S. federal tax credit, adoption is more affordable than you think.

Here are the ways most prospective parents raise the necessary funds: Federal and state tax credits, home equity loans, personal savings, employer benefits, family loans or gifts, churches, refinancing a mortgage, credit card payment, borrowing from 401(k), pension or insurance policy, or using grants and loans.

### [What is a home study?](#)

A home study is simply an evaluation of a home, and the family living in it, to be sure it/they can provide a safe and loving environment where the physical and emotional needs of the child can be met. Many different areas are covered, including almost all areas of your life. The home study is required by courts in most States.

### [Can I pick the gender of my child?](#)

While you can specifically request the gender of your child, it can cause significant delay in the waiting time. This is especially true in most agencies Caucasian adoption programs, due to the fact that most birth mothers choose the family during pregnancy before they know the sex of the baby. If a specific gender is important to you, you might want to consider international adoption, where more choices are possible.

### [Can the birth mother change her mind?](#)

A birth mother has the right to change her mind about adoption until she goes to court to release her parental rights. This hearing usually takes place two to four weeks after the birth of the baby. There is no time period following that hearing that allows her to change her mind. The release of rights is permanent at that hearing.

### [What are the ages of the families typically selected by a birth mother?](#)

The ages of families range from the mid-twenties to the mid-forties.

### [What kind of health information will we have about the birth mother?](#)

Complete health backgrounds are reported from the birth mother. Additionally, the agency will get prenatal records, if possible, and will provide the family with medical reports on the child.

### [What if the birth mother changes her mind?](#)

If a birth mother should change her mind and decide to parent, the couple will usually return to the profile book and be shown to other birth mothers.

### [Is domestic adoption permanent?](#)

After a birth mother releases her parental rights in court, she has twenty-one days to file an appeal or ask for a re-hearing. The basis for this cannot be a change in her decision. She cannot come back to the court after this time to ask for the release to be overturned.

### [Will we have to go to court?](#)

In most counties the adoption petitions are filed via mail. Some counties require a finalization hearing. Most agencies provide legal assistance to take care of all of the necessary legal work and will notify you if you must attend.

### [Do I have to attend an information meeting?](#)

Attending an information meeting is not required, but would certainly be helpful to you as both the domestic and international programs are reviewed. The information meeting is a wonderful way to help make the decision between an agency's international and domestic programs.

### [What are adoption awareness meetings?](#)

Some agencies provide a one to three-hour meeting where various adoption issues are discussed. You will meet other couples who are beginning the adoption process and will learn about networking, birth mothers, and a variety of other topics.

### [How long does my home study remain current?](#)

A home study is current for one year. If a couple has not been placed after one year, your caseworker will come to your home and do an update of your home study.