



Adoption Options at-a-Glance: A Companion Guide for Families

See accompanying fact sheet, "Adoption Options: A Fact Sheet for Families" (http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/f_adoption.cfm)

This guide focuses on *one* way to think about how choices in adoption may flow from one another:

- Where will our family's child come from?
- If we adopt domestically, what type of adoption is best for our family?
- If we choose domestic infant adoption, who will assist our family with the adoption?

Where will our family's child come from?

	Agency Oversight	Voluntary Surrender or Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)	Child Characteristics	Cost	Potential Wait	Adoptive Parent Characteristics	Post-Placement Support	Potential Birth Parent Involvement/ Access to Family History
DOMESTIC	Agency oversight varies from licensed and accredited agencies to unregulated facilitators.	Children are legally freed for adoption either through voluntary relinquishment or involuntary termination of the parental rights of their birth parents.	Every age child is available, including sibling groups of multiple ages. Children may be healthy or may have special physical or mental health needs.	Cost ranges from free or very little to \$40,000 or more.	Waits can be unpredictable and range from very short to 2 years or more.	Adoptive parent characteristics sought by birth parents vary. Specific characteristics have been found common to successful adoptive parents of children from foster care.	Post-placement support varies from none to a wide array of services.	The more "open" the adoption, the more potential access to a child's birth family history.
INTERCOUNTRY	Agencies facilitating intercountry adoptions must adhere to U.S. State and Federal regulations and regulations of the child's country of origin.	For immigration purposes, children must be considered "orphans" to be adopted.	Depending on the country, children available for adoption may include infants, school-aged children, sibling groups, and those with special needs due to parental substance abuse, poverty, or institutionalization.	Costs range from \$7,000 to \$30,000 or more, depending on the country and number of trips required.	Waits vary depending on the country. Some countries are able to predict time from "matching" to "placement" so families can plan their lives accordingly.	Requirements for adoptive parents are country-specific regarding age, marital status, background, number of children in family, and other characteristics.	Post-placement support ranges from none, to post-placement visits and required reports to the child's country of origin, to country-specific adoptive parent support groups.	International adoptions generally entail less birth parent involvement due to distance, language or cultural barriers, and taboos.

If we adopt domestically, what type of adoption is best for our family?

	Agency Oversight	Voluntary Surrender or Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)	Child Characteristics	Cost	Potential Wait	Adoptive Parent Characteristics	Post-Placement Support	Potential Birth Parent Involvement/ Access to Family History
DOMESTIC INFANT	Oversight varies from accredited and licensed agencies to unregulated facilitators.	Most domestic infant adoptions are voluntary on the part of birth parents.	Health status of domestic infants can vary greatly depending on prenatal care, substance abuse, genetics, etc.	Costs range from \$5,000 to \$40,000 or more depending on the agency or facilitator and State laws regarding allowable expenses.	Wait varies greatly depending on the kind of child a family is looking for, timing of the family's home study documents and child's need, and birth parents' choices of adoptive parents.	Agencies may have specific requirements regarding faith (if a faith-based agency), age, marital status, or other characteristics.	Post-adoption support varies greatly from none to support groups for families and children.	Many adoptions involve some level of contact between birth and adoptive families. Access to history varies greatly depending on the situation and type of agency or facilitator.
FOSTER CARE	Foster care adoptions can occur through public social service agencies (overseen by the State) or licensed private agencies (must meet State licensing standards and may be accredited).	Most children are freed for adoption by the involuntary termination of their birth parents' rights. Each State has its own Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) law.	Most children in foster care are older children or sibling groups of different ages. The average age of a waiting child is over 8 years old.	Foster care adoption may be free or involve minimal fees, such as attorney costs, which can often be reimbursed. Federal or State adoption subsidies may also be available depending on the child's special needs.	The wait for placement of children from foster care varies greatly depending on the type of child(ren) the family hopes to adopt and the family's ability to meet the child(ren)'s needs.	Qualities of families who successfully adopt children from the foster care system include flexible expectations and a tolerance for rejection.	Post-adoption support may include Federal or State adoption subsidies, foster/adoptive parent support groups, respite care, individual or family therapy, and other services.	Potential birth parent involvement varies from none to regular contact with the birth family (if in child's best interest). Agencies generally share all they know regarding a child's birth family history.

If we choose domestic infant adoption, who will assist our family?

	Agency Oversight	Voluntary Surrender or Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)	Child Characteristics	Cost	Potential Wait	Adoptive Parent Characteristics	Post-Placement Support	Potential Birth Parent Involvement/ Access to Family History
LICENSED PRIVATE AGENCY	Licensed agencies must meet State or other licensing standards.	Varies by State and type of adoption. Agencies must have surrenders and/or termination of parental rights for both the birth mother and father.	Licensed private agencies may place domestic infants, children in foster care, or children from other countries.	Generally the expenses are predictable and will be known up front. Cost ranges from nothing to \$40,000 or more.	The wait for a child varies greatly; intercountry adoptions may have more "predictable" waiting periods.	Adoptive parent characteristics vary depending on the type of adoption and child requested.	Post-adoption support varies depending on the region, agency resources, type of adoption, and needs of the child.	The "openness" of the adoption varies by agency, type of adoption, and preferences of all involved.
INDEPENDENT (ATTORNEY)	Independent adoptions generally do not involve as much oversight as adoptions with licensed agencies. They must comply with State laws and regulations (not all States allow for this type of adoption). Assisting attorneys must adhere to the standards of the State's Bar Association.	Generally voluntary relinquishments by birth mothers and/or birth fathers. Situations will vary by laws of the involved States.	Characteristics of children placed independently can vary greatly due to prenatal care and genetics.	Costs can be unpredictable but generally average between \$10,000 and \$15,000. State law regulates allowable expenses (e.g., birth mother's medical care).	Time to find a potential match and have a child placed is unpredictable and may be shorter or longer than a wait for an infant placement through a licensed private agency.	Since expectant parents choose a family, adoptive parents' characteristics depend on individual expectant or birth parent's wishes.	Post-placement support varies depending on the region and the child's needs.	Birth and adoptive families have direct contact with one another, often allowing for exchange of medical and family history.
FACILITATED/ UNLICENSED AGENCY	This type of adoption involves the least amount of oversight. Some States regulate facilitators, while in other States anyone can declare themselves to be an "adoption facilitator."	Generally voluntary relinquishments by birth mothers and/or birth fathers. Situations will vary by laws of the involved States.	The health status of domestic infants vary greatly, as with any newborn, due to prenatal care, genetics, etc.	Expenses are regulated by State law but can still be unpredictable. Facilitated adoptions can cost as much or more than licensed private agency adoptions.	The wait can vary tremendously depending on the situation and involved parties.	Since expectant parents often choose a family through a facilitator, adoptive parents' age and other characteristics will depend a great deal on the individual expectant or birth parents' wishes.	Post-placement services vary depending on the region, agency resources, and the child's needs.	Birth parent involvement and access to the child's family history vary depending on the facilitator and the wishes of involved parties.