



Plan to Adopt

Resource Packet

Contents as of August 2008

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Information provided by:

Donna Wheeler
Adoption Consultant
648 Bonaire Circle
Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250

Phone: (904) 246-9382

Email: Donna@PlanToAdopt.com



What Plan to Adopt will do:

- Meet with prospective parents, either in person or by telephone, to discuss family needs and circumstances.
- Evaluate the family's situation through the use of the Adoption Assessment Questionnaire and personal meetings.
- Formulate a written plan for each family that is unique to that family. This plan will include recommendations for 3 specific adoption programs, including countries, agencies and/or attorneys. The plan will outline potential costs, financing plans and prospective wait times.
- Help family to choose the appropriate program based upon the Plan to Adopt written plan.
- Work with family to accomplish the plan and bring the child into their family.

What Plan to Adopt will not do:

- Facilitate the adoption of stepchildren, identified children or foster children.
- Provide services that would necessarily be provided by a licensed social worker such as a home study.
- Provide legal services or legal advice.
- Provide actual adoption services such as those provided by licensed adoption agencies.
- Travel to other states or countries to receive the child.
- Accompany parent to state or country of adopted child.



Plan to Adopt

Adoption Myths and Realities

Myth 1: Adoption is outrageously expensive and out of reach for most families.

Fact: Adoption is often no more expensive than giving birth - averaging around \$15,000 for both domestic and international adoptions. Costs vary by agency and may be related to how the agency is funded, where their children come from and what services they provide to birth parents and adoptive families. Adoptions of healthy infants in the U.S. and of children abroad typically cost between \$5,000 and \$25,000, and could possibly be higher in certain circumstances. The adoption of a child waiting in foster care can be virtually without cost if the family works directly with a public social services agency. In fact, many public agencies provide adoption subsidies for children who are waiting for a family. If the family works through a private adoption agency, the costs are likely to be higher, but rarely as high as they would be for adopting an infant. The family should inquire about non-recurring expenses, as they may be reimbursable.

Of course, giving birth is covered by medical insurance while adoption is not. But there is a \$10,000 adoption tax credit available to virtually all families and many employers offer adoption reimbursements, some up to \$10,000.

Myth 2: Prospective families must be rich to be accepted as adoptive parents.

Fact: Many people with modest incomes adopt every year. Adoption professionals who make decisions about placing children generally are more concerned about the family's financial stability and how well they manage the financial resources they do have than about the actual income. They really only need to be able to prove that they earn enough money to support their family.

Myth 3: Families must own their own home.

Fact: Families who rent homes or live in apartments adopt children all the time. What's most important is that a child will have a safe place to live with a loving family.

Myth 4: Adoptive parents must be married and without children.

Fact: Single people, couples without children, and families who already have children by birth or by prior adoption can adopt. Some agencies and some foreign countries do have specific requirements for the marital status, age, number of children in the home and/or religion of people who adopt their children. However, all of these can be overcome by a thoughtful and dedicated adoption professional who is willing to do the research to find the right agency that will work with the prospective family.

Myth 5: I'm too old (or young) to adopt.

Fact: Again, certain agencies and foreign countries may have age restrictions. However, all that is generally required is that prospective parents be legally considered an adult. And any upper age limit is generally not applicable any more.

Myth 6: There are no healthy babies available.

Fact: There are over 20,000 U.S.-born infants placed for adoption each year. And there are at least as many foreign-born infants adopted by U.S. citizens each year.

Myth 7: It takes many years to complete an adoption.

Fact: The average time span to complete an adoption is one to two years. For prospective parents who are willing to consider a child other than a newborn, the wait for children within the foster care system is 4 to 8 months, depending on the workload in the county you are working with. Internationally, children can usually be adopted within 18 months to 2 years. The wait for a healthy, white newborn in the U.S. can be 1 to 7 years.

Myth 8: The process to adopt a child is too complicated.

Fact: While the laws do vary from state to state, generally adoption laws are very well defined and the process is straightforward. There are many documents to accumulate and paperwork to fill out, but a good adoption professional can help lead the family through the process with a minimum of stress.

Myth 9: Adopted children are more likely to be troubled than birth children.

Fact: Research shows that adoptees are generally as well adjusted as their non-adopted peers. In fact, there is a recently published study that indicates that those children adopted internationally at young ages may have fewer identity issues in adolescence than their non-adopted peers.

Myth 10: Parents can't love an adopted child as much as they would a biological child.

Fact: Love and attachment are not the result of, or guaranteed by biology. In fact, love is not based upon biology at all. The intensity of bonding and the depth of emotion are the same, regardless of how the child has joined the family. Love comes from acting like a parent, from taking care of your child, from showing affection to and receiving affection from your child and from making a commitment to your child. Families are made from love, not just biology.



Plan to Adopt

Some of the documents you will be required to provide as part of an adoption home study and dossier:

- Birth certificate
- Marriage License
- Evidence of dissolution of marriage/divorce (if necessary)
- Medical exam/physician's report
- Criminal background check (local, state, federal)
- Fingerprints
- Personal financial information (such as evidence of income, assets, bank accounts, tax returns, credit history, etc.)
- Evidence of residence (such as a home visit, rental records, evidence of ownership, etc.)
- Employment stability
- Autobiography for each parent
- Reference letters



Resources For Prospective Adoptive Parents

Books

Many of the following books can be found at a good, full-line bookstore, such as Barnes & Nobles, Books-A-Million or Borders. All are also available through Amazon.com.

- *Adopting: Sound Choices, Strong Families*, by Patricia Irwin Johnson
- *Adopting in America*, by Randall B. Hicks
- *Adopting a Toddler: What Size Shoes Does She Wear?*, by Denise Harris Hopenhauer
- *Adoption: The Essential Guide to Adoption Safely and Quickly*, by Randall Hicks
- *Adoption for Dummies*, by Tracy Barr and Katrina Carlisle
- *The Adoption Decision: 15 things our Want to Know Before Adopting*, by Laura Christianson
- *Attaching in Adoption – Practical Tools for Today's Parents*, by Deborah D. Gray
- *10 Steps to Successful International Adoption*, by Brenda Uekert
- *The Complete Adoption Book*, by Laura Beauvais-Godwin and Raymond Godwin
- *The Complete Book of International Adoption: A Step-by-Step Guide to Finding Your Child*, by Dawn Davenport
- *The Ultimate Insider's Guide to Adoption*, by Elizabeth Swire Falker
- *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Adoption*, by Chris Adamec

Websites

A recent Google search on the word "adoption" revealed over 126 million results! This is, of course, overwhelming. Needless to say, there is lots of information about adoption on the Internet. To get you started, the following websites are recommended:

Adopting.com (<http://www.adopting.com>) Here you will find everything prospective adoptive parents need to know about adopting, including how to get started; links to hundreds of adoption agencies, facilitators and attorneys; letters to birthparents from families looking to adopt newborns; support groups and much more! All the links to agencies, listservs, individual websites and on-line publications are here.

Adoption.com (<http://www.adoption.org>) This site serves and supports the needs of birthparents, adoptive parents and adoption professionals. They sponsor on-line chat groups, classified ads and many other interesting items.

Child Welfare Information Gateway (<http://www.childwelfare.gov/>) This site is a service of the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is a great resource regarding adoption agencies licensed in each state, services to adoptive families available from each state, publications about the adoption process, financing adoption and other topics of interest to prospective adoptive families.

National Adoption Center (<http://www.adopt.org>) This site can be used to view waiting children across the U.S., research adoption information, order books and other information, participate in on-line chats and introduce children to adoption information geared especially for them.

Rainbow Kids (<http://www.rainbowkids.com>) This site is considered the Internet's central location for adoption information, international adoptions, special needs adoption, adoption articles and Waiting Child photo listings.

On-Line Chat Groups, Message Boards, Email Lists, Bulletin Boards and Newsgroups

There is a huge and growing number of adoption email lists that provide a wonderful opportunity for support and the exchange of information. They range from general adoption lists to lists for specific discussion of topics like cross cultural adoption, adoption from specific countries, open adoption, single adoptive parents, and more. There are a variety of bulletin boards and newsgroups available as well as adoption chat forums. For a comprehensive list, as well as instructions on how to subscribe to all of these lists and others, please visit <http://www.adopting.com/groups.html>. You can also search through Yahoo! Groups to locate specific email groups related to your interest. There are dozens in existence – and you can always start a new one! For more information, go to <http://www.yahogroups.com>.

Magazines and Newsletters

Adoptive Families, published by New Hope Media LLC. For subscriptions, call 1-800-372-3300 or go to www.adoptivefamilies.com. Subscriptions are \$29.95 per year.

Adoption Today Magazine, a guide to the issues and answers surrounding international and domestic adoption is written by adoptive parents, adoptees and professionals in the fields of medicine, education, law, social work, child development and international and domestic adoption. Subscriptions are \$24 per year and may be obtained from <http://adoptionshop.com>.

Miscellaneous Resource

Adoptive Families 2008 Guide: Whether you're adopting for the first time, considering adopting again, or interested in keeping up with the latest adoption news and trends, the Adoptive Families Annual Adoption Guide will provide you with detailed, accurate information you won't find anywhere else. For prospective

adopters, this valuable resource includes a step-by-step overview of the adoption process as well as listings for hundreds of adoption agencies, support organizations and attorneys nationwide. This guide is available from www.theadoptionguide.com for \$14.95

Prepared by Donna Wheeler, Plan to Adopt and revised May 2008. For information about adoption and adoption plan services, please visit <http://www.plantoadopt.com>.