

So  
You're  
Interested  
In  
Adoption ...

God may be calling your family to love a child through the blessing of adoption, or you may be called to join us in the task of providing the funds necessary to help those called to adopt. It is our desire to challenge each believer to take James 1:27 to heart and invest in the life of a child.

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## Stories from OMPC Adoptive Families

*Allison Sinclair writes...*

ADOPTION IS NOT FOR EVERYONE! Just like not every Christian will be called to be a missionary in Africa, not every Christian will be called to bring home an orphan. The Bible is clear that we are to take care of the orphans, widows and oppressed, but "taking care" comes in many forms (prayer, financial support and service.) But, when the Lord moves in your heart to adopt, it's the hardest thing in the world to deny. No matter how great the fears, trust me, it's easier to go with God's flow than to fight it.

We already had two healthy, beautiful biological children. Connor was 3 and Jennings was 1. I had always wanted to adopt internationally, and for some reason after two kids the Lord was telling me that it was time to go down that road. It took Jerod about a year to get on board, but in April of 2006, he said he felt like it was the right thing to do. We turned our application in to Lifeline on May 5, 2006. I left the office and thought that it would be the happiest, most exciting moment for me, but instead I got in my car and had an absolute panic attack. "What if he has AIDS?" "What if his mom was a drug addict?" "What if he has Downs Syndrome?" "What if he dies in the orphanage?" It's sad to say, but all these questions really did flood my mind. I felt paralyzed.

But, after many deep breathing exercises and long conversations with those who had adopted before, I was able to say "What if he does have all these things?" God is still sovereign. It sounds so cliché, but it's true. God is either sovereign or He's not. He's not just sovereign in the really comfortable, easy times, but He's also sovereign in the really ugly, desperate times too. If God is asking you to move toward adoption, trust Him. He is faithful. And if you need a bag to breathe into, call me!

## **Our Story of Adoption Heath & Nikki Morris**

Just like every family is different, every adoption story is different. Rarely do people arrive at the decision to adopt at the same time and for the same reasons. In our case my wife and I went back and forth for a long time while undergoing treatment for infertility. By the time that we had exhausted most of the treatment options for people with unexplained infertility, adoption was on both of our minds and seemed like a logical choice for starting a family.

Let me just say to those of you who are struggling with the idea, it is OK to want to adopt for the purpose of creating a family. That is not a selfish notion, and it is not settling for less than God's best for your life. God created us for relationship within a family context. That dream that so many of us long for does not always work out because of the curse of sin we live under due to the fall of Adam. Husbands and wives are made for and want to be dads and moms. We want to nurture and love little ones who were given the miracle of life and who have been entrusted into our care. When my wife and I couldn't conceive because of unexplained infertility, it hurt. There was a pain in our hearts that would not go away. That pain was a longing and a desire that God had placed there for a reason. The reason was so that we would have the courage and desire to embark on the journey of adoption.

This was the context for our beginning. We were not trying to save the world, we just wanted children. Since we felt as though we were getting a late start, we decided for our first adoption to go through an agency that placed children from Ukraine. At that time, we were told that the timeframe for an adoption from Ukraine was 9-18 months, unlike the domestic process which could have lasted anywhere from 1-2 years. For us, another consideration was the fact that Ukrainian children looked very similar to us from an ethnicity standpoint. That was important to us at that time because we still believed that we could conceive and wondered about the dynamics of having family of mixed ethnicity. Today, we see that issue much differently having witnessed many families of mixed ethnicity that were created through the adoption of children from around the world. God has since opened our hearts and opened our eyes to the needs of all children regardless of race or ethnicity. However, that doesn't mean that anyone should feel guilty if they do not feel called in this regard.

The process and complexity of adoption can be overwhelming for some people. For others, it is just a matter of following directions, being patient, and understanding timelines involved. Emotions play a big role and will both help and hinder couples along the way. I found the difficulty to be similar to the process involved for college admission, with a bit more involvement by having to do a home study by a social worker. Once you have gone through the process, you can appreciate more the value of having a strict procedure. It serves to protect these children, and it helps prospective parents to think through what will be involved in bringing a child into their home.

As we already said, our first child was adopted from Ukraine. The entire process took just under 1 year from the time we submitted our original application, although recent adoptions from Ukraine now can be much longer in duration. This required a trip to Ukraine by my wife and me for an appointment with the National Adoption Organization in Ukraine to meet with their government representatives and look at the children they had available at that time. We did not find a child on our first appointment, and stayed in the country for three weeks until a child that met our parameters came available. In total we were in the country for just over 5 weeks and returned home with our son, who was 16 months old at that time.

For our second adoption, we chose to pursue a domestic option. We were able to use much of the same home study information from our first adoption and submitted our application a little over a year after returning home with our son thinking that we could be waiting for 1- 2 years before placement. Apparently God had other plans for our family as we brought home a 3 month old little girl about nine months after starting the process.

Both children are doing well and fit beautifully in our family. We treat them the same as any other family would their naturally born children with lots of love, correction and discipline. In our eyes, they are ours. We do not think we are taking care of another person's child. The responsibility and care of these children fall squarely on us. God has entrusted them into our lives to care for them and raise them as he instructs all parents to do and it is an awesome privilege.

## **The Eddins' Adoption Story**

If you told us 13 years ago that we would be the parents to 4 children we would have told you that you were crazy. Yet, here we are raising our wonderful 3 biological and 1 adopted daughter from China. We are overwhelmed with the noise most moments, but overwhelmed more with God's grace to allow us to experience the birth of our children and the joy of adoption.

Adoption for us was a road filled with certainty of God's calling from early on but uncertainty of timing. We knew after a difficult third pregnancy that God's plan was to complete our family through adoption. After the initial decision was made to adopt, there were many, many months of anxiety for Karen as she battled the questions of how to manage a home with 4 children. We knew God would provide the resources for the adoption (we had seen His provision so many times before), we were certain of the calling for us, but Karen did not know if she could do motherhood "well" for four kids. The Lord sweetly spoke and said, "that's the point", "you can't". "My power is made perfect in your weakness". He brought Karen to a place of utter dependence on His provision for survival for everyday issues of caring for kids. She had done it competently before with three. Adoption, however, has a way of bringing you beyond yourself...right were the Lord wants you to be.

It was quite a journey. For about 14 months Hadley and Karen struggled to love and be loved by each other. It was very distressing as experienced parents, because we had to learn new ways to parent an adopted child. The old ways had worked so well before adoption. Our biological kids felt loved, accepted, confident, and secure. But when our old ways didn't work with a deeply wounded child, the Lord again had us right where He wanted us.

Finally the Lord let the floodgates open. Each heart was pouring fully towards the other. Our hearts are now full of acceptance and unconditional commitment to love each other. It is an amazing feeling to finally get there...to finally feel like a complete family.

We would love to walk with you through this difficult, yet amazing journey. Be prepared... adoption seems to end up being a lot about changing yourself as much as changing the life of that precious little one you bring home. By the way, if you are adopting from China and are getting a girl...your will have to settle for second best because we feel that we got the best little girl in all of CHINA ☺.

Walking with you,

Pat and Karen Eddins

***The Path Laid Before Us...Adoption from the eyes of a Father***

## **The Douglas' Adoption Story**

Life is filled with many ups and downs. Without the rollercoaster, how would we ever know what was 'up' versus what was 'down.' The key is to know that "in everything, God is in control, has a plan for our lives, and when we are down, He will pick us up."

Early in our marriage, my wife and I chatted several times about adoption as part of our plan for a family. There was never a thought that infertility would be an issue for us although we considered adoption to be a core belief in building a family. All children should have parents who love and care for them. We thought we would have a couple of kids on our own and then add to our family through adoption.

### **Successful, uneventful birth**

After a year of marriage, we decided to begin our family. Three months later, Cathy became pregnant with our son, Reese. Cathy commented later on how uneventful and easy the conception, pregnancy, and birth of Reese was for her. Reese was a healthy baby boy and we witnessed the miracle of birth.

### **Infertility**

About a year after Reese was born, we decided to have another child. This time we tried for almost two years on our own with no conception. We then started infertility discussions, fertility testing, rounds of female hormones, escalated to artificial insemination, and finally to full embryo placement (IVF). The IVF was successful.

### **Loss of a child**

Our prayers for a second child had been answered; however, during the night before our 20 week ultrasound, Cathy's water broke. Standing at the side of my wife in the hospital, I watched the ultrasound monitor anxiously for a beating heart and with hopes that there was still enough fluid for our baby to survive. This was supposed to be a joyful day when we would find out the sex of our child. I prayed, "Father, You know how much human intervention has gone into making this little girl and we want her to be a healthy and happy girl. We only ask that Your Will be done." Our baby girl went to heaven sometime that evening. For me there was comfort during that painful time in knowing there was joy to be gained in the future and even though I didn't know why all of this had occurred, I knew He had a plan for Cathy and me.

The first part of His plan was I grew much closer to my wife during and after this event.

The second part of His plan was I truly understood from a human/emotional perspective the miracle of childbirth and how we should never take it for granted. I also understood what a miracle the birth of our son was and how we should be thankful for him every day.

The final part of His plan was to take that seed of adoption that He had planted so many years earlier in our hearts and make it bear fruit. Every child is an orphan. There is no difference now to us between our biological son and our adopted daughter and son. They are all orphans placed in our care by God to raise them to know and love Him.

### **Adoption Options**

Cathy said she never wanted to go through the hard work of the fertility process and the potential pain from the loss of another baby. Therefore, we began calling friends who had adopted. We spoke with those who had adopted in the US and those who had adopted internationally.

With so many horror stories about US adoption and the crazy laws we have here, we decided to adopt internationally. I cannot stress enough that the 'right agency' is key to a successful adoption. It is imperative that you get referrals from people you know who have had success with an agency.

With our agency, we were given the option of three different countries. We selected Russia. The negatives of an international adoption were a higher risk of a child with fetal alcohol syndrome or severe attachment disorder; however, there were multiple benefits of an international adoption such as removing a child from horrible living conditions, not having to deal with the US 'open/semi-open' adoptions, no risk of the child being taken from our home once we adopted them, and hopefully inspiring the Russian people to consider adopting the 500,000 orphans in their own country.

### **Our adoption experience**

We decided to begin our adoption fact finding mission in February 2006. We went to several different agencies and sought referrals from friends. In March 2006, we decided to go with a firm some friends of ours had used in Ohio. We began filling out paperwork making decisions such as selecting Russia, the number of children, and the sex and age ranges of the children to be referred.

Our request and personal history were prepared in the ‘dossier’ and sent to Russia at the end of June 2006. We received the referral of the children two weeks later.

We made our first trip to Russia in August 2006. On the first trip, we made our first visit to see the children that were selected for us. The children were located in the Lomonosov Baby Orphanage about an hour drive southwest of St. Petersburg, Russia. The first meeting was a very emotional one to meet Eugenia (Jenny) and Nikolai (Ethan).

We made our second visit in the beginning of October 2006 for our court hearing at which time the children were granted to us pending a 10 day notification period. During the court hearing, the children’s birth certificates were amended so that we were listed as the parents and legally changed their names to Jenny and Ethan Douglas.

We made our third and final visit to Russia at the end of October 2006 and picked the children up from the orphanage in St. Petersburg on October 31, 2006. We then traveled to Moscow Russia to the US Embassy to get visas to bring the children back to the United States.

### **Final thoughts**

While you may believe adoption is a rewarding experience, it is not an easy process. Adoption is a challenging process and the real challenges begin after you bring the children home. With both children, we have been through physical and speech therapy. We have also struggled with “bonding.”

The bonding period is one of the most difficult periods in the process. Adoption has its challenges but there are so many resources out there to help you including other adoptive parents who have gone through the experience ahead of you.

Adoption is not easy but raising children born to you is not easy either! Adoption has been one of the most rewarding experiences in our lives! His word is true... “Children are a reward from Him (Psalm 127:3).” We hope that you also will consider adoption as a way to build a family.

Alan & Cathy Douglas

## The Carroll's Adoption Story

Words that come to mind when I think of our journey through infertility and adoption are: *out of control, God's sovereignty, faith, courage, bittersweet joy, overwhelming love.*

Infertility was our first experience with being *out of control* of our lives. It was a shock. We thought we had lived by faith, but we had lived the "formula" and it had been working really well. Someone spoke to me early in the process that, in the midst of this unchosen journey, that we needed to come to grips with *God's sovereignty* and goodness to us. So the journey was a journey testing, wrestling with, and finally (because nothing else worked!), resting in God's sovereignty. We were being pushed to walk by *faith*, especially in the long gaps of waiting (with too much advice from too many well-informed folks). We had the time to really pray and know our heart's desire and it took all my *courage* to be vulnerable with God and others on our desire to be parents, not knowing what would happen.

This journey took us to a Christian adoption agency which was just beginning to do open adoptions. We had the privilege and pain of being able to meet and get to know both of our children's birthmoms and their families. It opened our eyes to what a great gift and sacrifice it was for these women to choose to place that baby in our arms. It was *bittersweet joy*, embracing the birth mother's painful sacrifice, and *overwhelming love*, as we held our child. In a small way, we caught a glimpse of God's love for us in sacrificing His son to make us whole and part of his family. It was total grace, a total gift, and we are so grateful. Now our babies are teenagers and we are in the midst of the "realities" of life and the same lessons of our lack of control and God's sovereignty, the forced walk of faith, living with courage being vulnerable about our heart's desires, and the experience of bittersweet joy and overwhelming love continue in our lives.

Nancy and Bill Carroll

## OMPC Adoptive Family Contact Information

There are many OMPC Adoptive Families who are willing to share their story with you. Please feel free to contact them:

Karen & Pat Eddins  
Home: 205-408-1483  
Karen cell: 205-790-5983  
Karen email: kleddins@hotmail.com  
Pat email: peddins@celgene.com  
Adopted from China

Heath & Nikki Morris  
Email Address: Heathandnikki@gmail.com  
Domestic adoption and from Ukraine

David & Terri Cox  
Email address: 5gadawgs@charter.net  
Adopted from Russia

Gary and Michelle Bullock  
Michelle's email: michelebullock2003@yahoo.com  
Home phone: 822-1072  
Adopted from Guatemala

Allison & Jarod Sinclair  
Email address: allisonakerssinclair@yahoo.com  
Adopted from Guatemala

Holly & Rhett Wheeler  
Home Phone: 980-7149  
Email Address: rhettnholly@bellsouth.net  
Domestic adoption

Alan & Cathy Douglas  
Home Phone: 419-0684  
Email Address: cathyldouglas@gmail.com  
Adopted from Russia

## Adoption Services and Resources

### ◆ Lifeline Children's Services

2908 Pump House Road  
Birmingham, Alabama 35243  
Phone: 205.967.0811  
Fax: 205.969.2137  
<http://www.lifelineadoption.org>  
Email: [lifeline@lifelineadoption.org](mailto:lifeline@lifelineadoption.org)

### ◆ Children of the World

811-A Fairhope Avenue  
Fairhope, Alabama 36532  
Phone: (251) 990-3550  
Fax: (251) 990-3494  
<http://web.mac.com/childrenoftheworld/Site/Home.html>

### ◆ Bethany - National Office

901 Eastern Ave NE  
PO Box 294  
Grand Rapids, MI 49501-0294  
Phone: 616.224.7610  
Email: [info@bethany.org](mailto:info@bethany.org)  
<http://www.bethany.org/>  
To find the Bethany office nearest you:  
<http://www.bethany.org/A55798/bethanyWWW.nsf/0/9CF1641EA2B319C285256CE2006E5C31>

### ◆ UAB International Adoption Clinic

**The mission** of the International Adoption Clinic is to serve the initial and ongoing medical, developmental and emotional needs of adoptive parents and their children from around the world. We are a non-profit clinic located at Children's South in Birmingham, Alabama. We are staffed with professionals who have a love for children that have been abandoned in developing countries and desire to see them accepted into loving and well-equipped families.

For more information regarding our services, you may contact Brooke Talley by phone at 205-939-6964. Email is also a very good way to contact our clinic. Send emails to [adoption@peds.uab.edu](mailto:adoption@peds.uab.edu) or complete the [Online Form](http://adoption.chsys.org/default.aspx?id=25&formAction=takeit&formid=3&formname=Contact_Form) at [http://adoption.chsys.org/default.aspx?id=25&formAction=takeit&formid=3&formname=Contact\\_Form](http://adoption.chsys.org/default.aspx?id=25&formAction=takeit&formid=3&formname=Contact_Form) Home Website: <http://adoption.chsys.org>

# Beginner's Guides to Adoption

\*\*This information was taken from

<http://www.howtoadopt.org/YourAdoptionGuide/educate-yourself.html>

(associated with Shaohannah's Hope). You can access this website to view many of the links mentioned below.

## Educate Yourself

Early on in the process, it is best to read information free from bias. It is our intention to provide prospective adoptive families with general adoption information in order to help you assess the type of adoption which is right for you without a bent towards a particular adoption agency, facilitator, type of adoption, country from which to adopt, or age of child. We have identified a number of beginner's guides to adoption, on-line courses, websites, and supplemental materials.

The recommended beginner's guides do overlap in many respects, but each provides its own unique perspectives on adoption. Shaohannah's Hope strongly recommends that you start your education with at least one or two of these beginner's guides because these resources will help you to gain an understanding of the nuances and many facets of adoption. These guides are listed below along with an informative course that you can take (free of charge) from Adoption Learning Partners.

- ◆ U.S. Dept. of H.H.S. - National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC) (all types of adoption) - [download PDF](#) at <http://www.howtoadopt.org/YourAdoptionGuide/educate-yourself.html>
  
- ◆ Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (Foster Care Adoptions) - [order the guide](#) at <http://www.howtoadopt.org/YourAdoptionGuide/educate-yourself.html>
  
- ◆ NAIC Guide in Spanish - [click to read](#) at <http://www.howtoadopt.org/YourAdoptionGuide/educate-yourself.html>
  
- ◆ On-line Beginner's Course on International Adoption - Adoption Learning Partners "Eyes Wide Open: Preparation Guide to International Adoption" - [click to read](#) at <http://www.howtoadopt.org/YourAdoptionGuide/educate-yourself.html>

In addition to the guides and the online course, you will want to do the following to get informed:

- ◆ Conduct research through the web
- ◆ Talk to Adoptive Families about their triumphs and trials in the process. Learn from those who have gone before you. One good way to meet several families with a variety of adoption experiences is to attend meetings of a local adoptive parent support group. For a list of support groups in your area, contact the [North American Council on Adoptable Children \(NACAC\)](#). Another way is to attend an adoption conference in your state or region, or a national conference such as the one sponsored each year by NACAC.
- ◆ Talk with Child Welfare Professionals/Representatives from National Organizations or adoptive support networks which are not directly involved in child placement but are versed on the issues.
- ◆ Hear from the Children "waiting" right here in the United States for families to adopt them. Visit: [Adopt US Kids](#), [fosterlinks.org](#), and [Foster Club.org](#).

### **Conduct a Self-Assessment**

The self-assessment is the best way to find out if you are ready to adopt. Ask yourselves the following questions:

- ◆ Do you clearly understand why you want to adopt?
- ◆ Are both parents committed to adoption?
- ◆ Does your lifestyle allow you the time necessary to meet the needs of the child you are seeking to adopt?
- ◆ How will adoption change the dynamics of your family and do you have what you need to make it work?
- ◆ Do you have deeper issues in your marriage which you are hoping the adoption will help with?
- ◆ Do you realize that the notion of saving an orphan and their gratitude to you for doing so is not a foundational reason on which to base an adoption? Yes, in many senses, adoption can and does save orphans from ill fates; however, expecting regular expressions of gratitude from your adopted children would be like expecting biological children to live in a constant state of gratitude for and towards their biological parents.
- ◆ Do you have support from your nucleus family?
- ◆ Are you called to provide/care for orphans in other ways?

## **Finally, do you possess these needed characteristics?**

- ◆ Perseverance and patience; nearly all adoptions involve a significant "waiting" period(s) in the adoption process.
- ◆ The ability to accept without judging, and to love unconditionally
- ◆ Awareness that healing doesn't always come quickly; once the child has arrived there is usually an adjustment period. (with an older child there is often a testing period — the child will want to know if your love is unconditional.)
- ◆ Willingness to learn new things
- ◆ A belief in adoption and ability to commit
- ◆ Open to dealing with the child's issues as if the child was a birth child — adoption is forever and adopted children must be treated as equal to biological children
- ◆ Resourcefulness.
- ◆ Please know that when you adopt, you are not only providing love and a home, you are also sharing your values with a child. An examination of your belief system can help you define your own needs and be aware of your expectations.

Parenting skills are essential to successful adoptions. If you are first time parents, and particularly if you are adopting older children, parenting classes are worth considering.

# Types of Adoption

There are many different types of adoption, such as: kinship adoption, domestic foster care adoption, private, domestic private, inter-country adoption, adoption of a healthy child or child with special needs, transracial adoption, and the adoption of an individual child or of a sibling group.

**Domestic Private:** These Adoptions can be facilitated by licensed adoption agencies (for-profit, or non-profit), attorneys or adoption facilitators, physicians, or other intermediaries. Often these children are adopted directly from their birth families using the services of adoption attorneys or adoption agencies to make sure that the legal requirements are met. Usually, the child's biological family chooses the adoptive family, and both parties take part in deciding how much future contact the original family will continue to have with the newly created family.

While most children adopted through private adoptions are infants, there are still many factors and variables to consider. Some of these are whether to consider only healthy infants, or infants with special needs or risk factors; whether to adopt only within your same race and ethnicity, or to adopt transracially and the degree of openness you wish to have with the child's birth family. A competent agency or attorney can provide you with counseling and classes to help you sort through these issues and make these decisions wisely.

**Inter-Country (International):** Adoption of children who are citizens of one country by parents who are citizens of a different country. Such adoptions require the approval of the governments of both countries. (When choosing a country from which to adopt, it is important to check the State Department website to make sure that this country is currently allowing inter-country adoptions to the U.S. to take place. Go to <http://www.howtoadopt.org/YourAdoptionGuide/types-of-adoption.html> for more information.

**Kinship/Relative:** Adoption of children by someone related to the children by family ties or by prior relationship connection.

Children are sometimes adopted by their stepmothers, stepfathers, aunts, uncles or grandparents, if one or both of their parents cannot take care of them. These adoptions also need the assistance of licensed adoption professionals to make sure legal requirements are met.

**Domestic Adoption from State Foster Care:** Adoption of children from the U.S. foster care system, or public child welfare system. Many children in the community need new families because they are growing up in state-sponsored foster care in temporary situations that can change at any moment. These children are all ages-infants to adolescents-and races, some with health problems and some with none. Many are sibling groups of 2 or more children who need a family together. Having suffered losses, these children need new parents who are committed to helping them make the transition to a permanent home and the optimism and hope that a permanent family can offer.

While these children are generally in the custody of the public child welfare agency, these agencies often contract with private provider agencies in the community to perform the adoption services including preparation classes, home-studies, post adoption support and finalization. For most of these children, the state will provide access to Medicaid for their medical needs and a subsidy which can help meet other needs such as tutoring, summer camp, therapy, and child care or enrichment activities.

*"I share my story of growing up in foster care because I want to be the seen of the unseen and the voice of the unheard." 20-year-old child who grew up in Foster care*

For more information about adopting through the foster care system go to <http://www.davethomasfoundation.org/Adoption-Facts/F-A-Q->

# The True Story: Dispelling Myths

## Facts

Each year, approximately 120,000 Americans choose to become parents or expand their families through adoption, and there are millions more who have considered adoption. The calling to adopt and the path that families take in this journey is personal to each. Last year, approximately 60,000 Americans chose to adopt from the U.S. foster care system, and an even larger, yet unknown, number choose to care for kin; more than 22,000 Americans chose to travel overseas to adopt from such countries as China, Russia, Guatemala, South Korea, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, India and the like; and still another 50,000 or more others have chosen private domestic adoption right here in the United States. For statistics on foster care and foster adoptions visit the [Children's Defense Fund](#).

## Myths vs. Reality

According to a recent national study, 81.5+ million people have considered building their family through adoption. Sadly, for the vast majority of these people, the journey ends with the many myths of adoptions they have heard. Because most never get past the myths of adoption, they never experience the miracle of adoption. For most of us, the only information we ever had about adoption has been mostly myth. These myths need to be dispelled. So, we present here some of the myths of adoption-and the true and wonderful realities that counter those myths for those who want to dig deeper and know the truth:

<b>Myth</b>	<b>Reality</b>
There are no babies being placed for adoption in the U.S.	20,000 or more U.S.-based infants are placed for adoption each year.
Adoptive parents must wait five years or more for a baby.	The average wait in a domestic adoption is less than two years. This reduction in time is largely due to the laws mentioned in the previous section.
Adopting parents pay extortionate amounts -- tens and tens of thousands of dollars.	Costs of private domestic adoptions average \$15,000 and public adoptions from the foster care system have very little cost associated with them. After the Adoption Tax Credit, the cost is comparable to that

	<p>of giving birth in a hospital. There is a federal adoption tax credit, which is currently up to \$11,650 of qualified adoption expenses for international adoptions and is a flat credit for special needs domestic adoptions. For more on the adoption tax credit and foundations which provide adoption grants see the highlights section.</p>
<p>Birth-parents can arrive at any time to reclaim their child.</p>	<p>Once an adoption is finalized, the adoptive family is recognized as the child's family by law.</p>
<p>Birth-mothers are all troubled teens.</p>	<p>Most birth-mothers today are older than 18. In most cases, it's lack of support and/or resources that causes them to place their children for adoption.</p>
<p>Children in foster care have too much "baggage."</p>	<p>Children in state care have most likely experienced some sort of trauma in their lives and for various reasons, often neglect or abuse, have been placed in foster care. However, by educating yourself and preparing for your child's needs before completing the adoption, you will be more prepared to face any challenges that may come up. Children in foster care, just like any children, have enormous potential to thrive when given love, patience and a stable environment. Just ask U.S. Senator Ben "Nighthorse" Campbell, Minnesota Viking Dante Culpepper, Washington, D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams, or Miss USA 2000 Lynnette Cole. They were all once foster children who were adopted by caring adults.</p>
<p>All children in foster care have some kind of physical, mental or emotional handicap; that's why they are classified as "special needs."</p>	<p>The term "special needs" is somewhat misleading, because it can mean that the child is older, a minority, or requires placement with his/her siblings — in other words, a child who has a "special need" for a family! While some children are dealing with physical or emotional concerns, just like other children, they need the nurturing and support that a permanent family can provide. Many foster children are in the "system" because their birth parents weren't protective and nurturing caretakers, not because the children did anything wrong.</p>
<p>Adoptive parents must be married and without children.</p>	<p>Anyone can adopt, including single people, couples without children, and families who already have children by birth or by prior</p>

	adoption. However, many foreign countries and some private agencies have specific requirements as to the marital status, age, and number of children, or religion of people who adopt the children.
I am not sure I can love an adopted child the way I love a biological child.	Many prospective adoptive parents are influenced by this fear/myth. The truth that is testified to over and over again after adopting, is that you can and do love an adopted child just as much as a biological child. Love is not so much a matter of blood- line, as love-line. It is relationship.

\*\*Myths were compiled by staff at Shaohannah's Hope from aspiranet.org, beliefnet.com, and adoptioninformation.com

## Financial Information

The total cost of adoption varies depending upon a number of factors such as the type of adoption, the agency through which you work, the state in which you reside, attorney fees and whether travel is required. There are many options to help pay for the cost of adoption so do not be dissuaded based on the cost. Please see the list below for several ideas for how to gain assistance as you begin this process.

### **Range of Adoption Costs:**

Foster Care Adoptions \$0 - \$2,500

Licensed Private Agency Adoptions \$5,000 - \$40,000+

Independent Adoptions \$8,000 - \$40,000+

Intercountry Adoptions \$7,000 - \$30,000

(Source: [http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/s\\_cost/s\\_cost.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/s_cost/s_cost.cfm))

### **Where to go for Adoption Financial Assistance:**

- ◆ **Federal Adoption Expense Tax Credit:** For tax year 2005, the federal adoption expense tax credit increased to a maximum of \$10,630 per adoption. See <http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc607.html> and the instructions for form 8839 at: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i8839.pdf> for details. Also, read the Adoptive Families article, "The Adoption Tax Credit," by Mark McDermott, at [www.adoptivefamilies.com/clip.php](http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/clip.php). For additional information on the tax assistance available go to <http://www.nacac.org/adoptionssubsidy/factsheets/taxes.html>
- ◆ **State Tax Credits:** Several states have tax credits for adoptive families, sometimes restricted to those adopting from that state's public child welfare system. Contact your state adoption unit for more information.
- ◆ **Adoption Subsidies:** Children with special needs may qualify for a subsidy to help parents pay for ongoing treatments. For more information: North American Council on Adoptable Children, [www.nacac.org/adoptionssubsidy.html](http://www.nacac.org/adoptionssubsidy.html).
- ◆ **Nonrecurring Adoption Expense Reimbursement:** Families who adopt from the public system may be eligible for reimbursement of adoption-related expenses, such as homestudy, travel, and attorney costs. More information: [www.nacac.org/subsidy\\_stateprofiles.html](http://www.nacac.org/subsidy_stateprofiles.html).

- ◆ **Military Subsidies:** Active-duty personnel are reimbursed for one-time adoption costs, whether adopting an infant, a waiting child, or a child from abroad. Find out more at [naic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/f\\_milita.cfm](http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/f_milita.cfm). There is a one-time subsidy program if you are full-time military personnel. Adopting couples or singles can receive up to \$2000 reimbursement on adoption expenses for one child or \$5,000 for siblings. Eligible personnel should complete DD Form 2675 (Reimbursement for Adoption Expense). Contact your military branch for more information. The form can be obtained <http://www.dior.whs.mil/forms/DD2675.PDF>
  
- ◆ **Employee Benefits:** More employers are offering adoption benefits for employees, and the dollar amounts of these benefits are growing, with the average expense reimbursement now approaching \$4,000. Contact your supervisor or human resources department and ask if they offer an adoption financial assistance program. If they do not, ask if they will assist you personally, let them know to contact the IRS to receive a tax write off for the money they donate to your adoption. Many have tried this and succeeded! Government agencies usually provide this service. Check <http://www.benefits.adoption.com> for a list of major corporations that offer adoption assistance to employees. Two resources for help in lobbying for these benefits: [www.adoptionfriendlyworkplace.org](http://www.adoptionfriendlyworkplace.org) and [www.benefitsguides.com](http://www.benefitsguides.com). Also read "How to Lobby Your Employer for Adoption Benefits" at [www.adoptivefamilies.com/clip.php](http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/clip.php). Adoption benefits may include paid or unpaid time off during the adoption process and financial reimbursement for expenses. Costs vary, depending on whether adoption involves an American infant, an older American child in foster care (many of whom have disabilities or siblings) or an adoptee from overseas.
  
- ◆ **Grants and Loans:** Some adoption agencies and organizations offer adoption grants and/or low-cost loans. Agencies with such programs include Holt International, World Association for Children and Parents (WACAP), and Dillon International. (See the adoption agency listings in this Guide for contact information.) The Gift of Adoption Fund: [www.giftofadoption.org](http://www.giftofadoption.org), and A Child Waits, [www.achildwaits.org](http://www.achildwaits.org) (for Eastern European adopters) offer grants. Shaohannah's Hope (<http://members.shaohannahshope.org/site/PageServer>) offers financial assistance as well. LifeSong has a fund - to find out more information go to <http://www.irvingbible.org/index.php?id=987>. God's Grace adoption ministry also provides grants and interest free loans. Go to <http://www.ggam.org/>

◆ **Other Resources:** Look into cash advances from credit cards, second mortgages, home equity loans, and special adoption loans. Consider borrowing from your life insurance policy, 401(k), or pension plan. Approach your church about the possibility of adoption assistance. Perhaps you can tap friends and relatives. Maybe you can take a second job until your child comes, or identify a birthmother who already has medical insurance. More ideas are found in the booklet, "How to Make Adoption an Affordable Option," available from the National Endowment for Financial Education at [www.nefe.org/adoption](http://www.nefe.org/adoption), or by calling 888-878-3256 (item #508-F). Also see the Burke Family's list of adoption funding sources at [www.angelfire.com/journal/adoptionhelp/adopthelp.html](http://www.angelfire.com/journal/adoptionhelp/adopthelp.html).

◆ **Additional Websites for Adoption Financial Assistance**

- For adoption assistance when adopting out of foster care go to [http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f\\_subsid.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_subsid.cfm)
- For international adoptions see <http://www.lydiafund.org/applications/applications.html>
- For assistance for special needs or sibling group adoption - <http://www.hfgf.org/>

## **Books on Adoption**

*Adoption Nation: How the Adoption Revolution is Transforming America* By Adam Pertman

*The Essential Adoption Handbook* By Colleen Alexander-Roberts

*Adoption Without Fear* By James L. Gritter

*Adopting in America: How to Adopt Within One Year* By Randall B. Hicks

*The Adoption Sourcebook* By Cheryl Jones, MSW

*Dear Birthmother: Thank You for Our Baby* By Kathleen Silber and Phylis Speedlin

*Reaching Out: The Guide to Writing a Terrific Dear Birthmother Letter* By Nelson Handel

*Adopting on Your Own: The Complete Guide to Adopting as a Single Parent* By Lee Varon

*Birthmarks: Transracial Adoption in Contemporary America* By Sandra Patton

*Inside Transracial Adoption* By Gail Steinberg and Beth Hall

*Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self* By Brodzinsky, Schechter & Henig

*Real Parents, Real Children: Parenting the Adopted Child* By Holly van Gulden & Lisa M. Bartels-Rabb

*Making Sense of Adoption: A Parent's Guide* By Lois R. Melina

*How to Raise An Adopted Child* By Judith Schaffer and Christina Lindstrom

*Talking With Your Young Children About Adoption* By Mary Watkins, Ph.D. and Susan Fisher, MD

# Adoption and Foster Care Terminology

This glossary includes terms you are likely to hear or read as you pursue your adoption or foster care journey. It includes child welfare and legal/court terms that might be unfamiliar to some.

**Abuse, or Child Abuse:** An injury or pattern of injuries to a child that is non-accidental and the result of acts or omissions of a child's caretaker. Types of abuse include physical abuse, sexual abuse and denial of critical care. Child abuse and neglect, or maltreatment, are defined in both federal and state law. Federal law provides a foundation for states by identifying a minimum set of acts or behaviors that define physical abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse. The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act defines child abuse and neglect, at a minimum, as "any recent act or failure on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm" to a person under age 18.

**Adoption:** The creation of a new, permanent legal family for a child or youth. The adoption process involves the termination of the parents' rights and the creation of parental rights in a new caregiver(s). Adoptive families may or may not be related to the child or youth before the adoption. Adoptions must be approved by a judge and finalized in court.

**Adoption Assistance or Subsidy:** Financial assistance available to families who adopt children from foster care. This assistance is designed to help the family meet the regular and special needs of the young person.

**Advocate, or Child Advocate:** This term is often used to describe an attorney assigned to represent the child or youth in all legal matters and court proceedings related to her case.

**Adjudication or Adjudicatory Hearing:** A hearing to determine the veracity of allegations of child abuse or neglect in a petition presented to the court.

**AFCARS:** Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System—State-by-state data on children in foster care compiled by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). All states are required to participate in the AFCARS data collection process.

**Agency:** An organization that has met certain standards and is allowed by law to provide services to children and families. In many jurisdictions, private agencies, also called "contract" or "provider agencies" share many responsibilities with the public child welfare agency for the care, protection and supervision of children and youth in foster care.

**Agging Out:** When a youth leaves foster care because they have reached a certain age (typically 18, 19 or 20) without obtaining permanence through returning home, adoption or guardianship or kinship care.

**Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA):** A permanency alternative permitted under ASFA that allows a young person to have a "permanent home" that is not his home of origin, adoption, guardianship or kinship care. This generally is not considered as legally or emotionally secure as the three principle permanency options.

**ASFA:** The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, which requires permanency hearings within 12 months of initial placement, sets deadlines for filing termination of parental rights petitions, and establishes the right of foster and adoptive parents to receive notice of, and appear in, juvenile and family court proceedings.

**Appeal:** A request to a higher court to change a lower court's decision. Anyone who is unsatisfied with a judge's verdict has the right to appeal the verdict. When parents' rights are terminated involuntarily, they sometimes appeal the decision.

**Biological Parents or Birth Parents:** The child/youth's family of origin: the person(s) who gave birth to, or fathered the child.

**CASA:** Court Appointed Special Advocates are volunteers who receive special training to bring information about an abused or neglected child's welfare to the attention of the court. Different programs have varying requirements, but most CASAs visit their assigned children on a regular basis, write reports to the court, and inform the judge of what they consider to be in the best interests of the child. In some states they may be referred to as Guardians ad Litem, even though they are not attorneys.

**Case Plan:** Once a child has been adjudicated dependent, the child welfare agency works with the parents and youth, and their legal advocates, to develop a plan that outlines the types of services that the child and his family will receive, such as parenting classes, mental health or substance abuse treatment, and family counseling; reunification goals, including visitation schedules and a target date for a child's return home; as well as concurrent plans for an alternative permanent placement options should reunification goals not be met. The agency agrees to provide the services and the parents must agree to work on their assigned tasks. Case plans typically include requirements parents must meet before their children can return to them. The court reviews and may modify the recommended case plan.

**Case Reviews:** Federal law requires states to review a child's case at least every six months after placement in foster care to determine whether the placement is still necessary and appropriate, whether the case plan is being properly and adequately followed, and whether progress has been made toward reunifying the family. The case review must also set a target date for the child's return home, adoption, or other permanent placement. Many times the child welfare agency holds these reviews (also called administrative reviews) within the child welfare agency, but the law requires that periodically, the court must conduct these reviews (called judicial

reviews).

**Child Protective Services:** Usually a division within the child welfare agency that responds to and investigates child abuse and neglect allegations and provides initial services to stabilize a family.

**Concurrent Case Plan, or Concurrent Planning:** A process that allows the child welfare agency and the child's permanency planning team to work on two or more permanency plans at the same time. For example, while primarily focusing on reunifying a child with her parents, the team may also begin to consider and plan for adoption or guardianship if reunification is not successful within desired and/or legally required time frames.

**Confidentiality:** Protection of information related to a child's identity, life and circumstances, and that of her family, from inappropriate disclosure to other parties.

**Continuance:** When a court hearing is not completed, it can be "continued" to another date. For example, this may occur when someone whose presence is needed does not come to court, or when the judge does not have sufficient information to act on the case.

**Dependent Child:** Once the child is removed from his home, he and his parents become formally involved with the juvenile or dependency court system, and the child is considered in state custody and generally a ward or dependent of the court.

**Dependency Court:** Also known as juvenile and family courts that have specific jurisdiction over child maltreatment and court protection cases including foster care and adoption. In jurisdictions without a designated family court, general trial courts hear child welfare cases along with other civil and criminal matters.

**Disposition:** This is the court decision about where a child or youth should live (such as in state custody), as well as what the parents, the child welfare agency and the youth must do to change the problems that brought the young person into care.

**Dossier:** The dossier is a compilation of documents which is assembled for an international adoption and presented to the foreign government. Every country is unique and each has different document requirements. Typically, the dossier will include such items as Birth Certificates of both parents, Marriage licenses and divorce decrees from previous marriages, health statements, Letters of reference, Financial statements and tax records, employment verification, police records, state background and child abuse clearances, Approved Adoption Home Study and Pictures of your home and family.

**Emancipation:** When the court declares that a youth legally is an adult prior to age 18. A youth who is emancipated from foster care is no longer a ward of the court (or in foster care), and is likely to lose eligibility for other services including independent living and tuition vouchers.

**Family Group Conferencing:** Also known as Family Group Decision Making or Family Team Meetings, these are model approaches to child welfare practice in which all those people concerned about a child's welfare meet to develop a plan for that child. Generally facilitated by professionals, most plans must be approved by a judge if the child has already been adjudicated dependent. In some cases, the conference takes place before any court action and prevents court involvement while providing services to the family.

**Foster Care:** Temporary care provided to children or youth who are removed from their biological/birth family's custody and are placed in state custody. Foster care is 24-hour care of a child by a person or agency approved by the state to provide this care and includes placement with relatives, foster families, group homes, shelters and other placements for children under the age of 18. Foster care provides food and housing to meet the physical needs of children who are removed from their homes.

**Foster Home:** A temporary home where a youth may live while in the custody of the state.

**Group Home:** A home that cares for many foster youth, often using caseworkers or other staff for supervision instead of foster parents. Often group homes are designed to serve children with a higher level of emotional, behavioral, developmental or medical needs than children who are placed in foster homes. In some jurisdictions, these may also be known as congregate care homes, residential placements or treatment facilities.

**Guardian ad Litem (GAL):** A person appointed by the court to represent the best interested of the child or youth in any legal proceedings involving the young person. Often but not always an attorney. GALs may be paid or may serve in a pro-bono (unpaid) capacity. In some areas CASAs are called GALs even though they are not attorneys.

**Guardianship:** Federal law defines legal guardianship as a judicially created relationship between child and caregiver intended to be permanent and self-sustaining. The following parental rights with respect to the child are transferred to the caretaker: protection, education, care and control, custody, and decision-making. This form of permanency may be used when adoption is not the preferred option, as determined by a court in conjunction with the agency recommendation and input from the child and caregivers.

**Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption:** The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption is a multilateral treaty designed to apply to all international adoptions between countries that ratify it. Developed under the Hague Conference on Private International Law, the Convention is the result of a five-year process involving participants from 66 prospective member countries.

**Independent Living Program (or ILP):** Also known as the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, this is a federally-funded program providing

services to foster youth to prepare them for adulthood, including development of life skills such as money management, job readiness, menu planning and preparation, etc. The federal program also provides funds for college scholarships, and in some cases may provide for room and board assistance for youth over the age of 18. Independent living is not a permanency plan for a young person, but rather a set of services related to preparation for adulthood.

**Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA):** An agreement between states to ensure that children who are placed for adoption across state lines are able to receive medical care and medical coverage through Medicaid.

**Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC):** An agreement among states to ensure protection and services to children and youth when they are placed across state lines for foster care, adoption or living with a relative. Both states ("sending state" - the state the child currently lives in, and "receiving state" - the state the child is going to) must complete required paperwork to demonstrate that the legal protections and requirements of the ICPC have been met before a child can be moved across state lines.

**Kinship or Relative Care:** 24-hour care for children and youth provided by relatives such as grandparents, aunts, uncles or even older (adult) siblings. In many jurisdictions, kinship caregivers are required to be approved by the same standards as non-relative foster parents when providing care for a child in state or court custody.

**Mandatory Reporter:** A person designated by law who must report suspected abuse or neglect of a minor child. Nearly all parties involved in a child welfare case, including foster parents, are mandatory reporters.

**Maintenance Payment:** The monthly payment issued to foster parents by the public child welfare agency for the child's care and covers basics costs such as food, clothing, shelter, school supplies, grooming, transportation, and recreation.

**Mediation:** An attempt to settle a legal dispute through active participation of a third party (mediator) who works to find points of agreement and help those in conflict agree on a fair result. Mediation may occur at any time during a dependency case from the decision about where a child will live, to what will be in the case plan, to making a permanency decision. The court must approve the decision the parties have reached if the child had been adjudicated dependent.

**Neglect:** The failure of the person responsible for the care of a child to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical care or supervision necessary for the child's health and welfare. See also Abuse, above for further legal definitions of both child abuse and neglect.

**Non-adversarial Approaches (also referred to as Problem-Solving**

**Approaches):** The use by courts of mediation and other approaches to resolving a child welfare case including family group conferencing. By virtue of bringing all parties together, these approaches are less adversarial than traditional courtroom approaches. Attorneys and other advocates may or may not be involved in non-adversarial approaches. The court must approve the decision the parties have reached if the child has been adjudicated dependent.

**Non-relative Placement:** Placement of a child with people who are not related to the child. They are usually licensed foster care providers paid by the child welfare agency, although sometimes they are interested families in the community who undergo background checks and are supervised by the child welfare agency.

**Notice of Hearings:** The required notification of everyone involved in a young person's case of the date, time, and place of a court hearing. People required to receive notice include the youth, birth parents, foster parents, the agency with custody, and legal advocates assigned to all parties. A foster parent has a right to notice, but is not considered a "party" to the case and therefore, does not necessarily have the right to speak in court or to have a legal advocate of his own.

**Orphan:** A child without parents.

**Orphanage:** An orphanage is an institution dedicated to caring for orphans (children without parents). Orphanages often attempt to find homes for children in their care. They may be privately or publicly funded.

**Party to a Case:** People who either file a complaint with the court or are the ones who are the subject of the complaint. Parties in a dependency case typically include the child, parents, and child welfare agency.

**Permanency Hearing:** A court hearing to consider a child or youth's need for secure and permanent placement in a timely manner. Under ASFA, This hearing must be held within 12 months of a child's placement in foster care, and revisited thereafter until permanence is achieved.

**Reunification:** Return of a child to the family from which she was removed. Most often, reunification involves the child's birth family, but in cases where a child was removed from an adoptive family or other legal guardian, reunification can also occur.

**Sibling or Sibling Group:** A sibling is a person's brother or sister. A sibling group is a group of two or more siblings. Most child welfare agencies have a policy to keep siblings together when in foster care, and for the purpose of permanency planning, although this does not always happen in practice.

**Special Needs Child:** Child welfare workers sometimes use this term to refer to a child who faces challenges that may make it harder to find the child a permanent family if reunification or kinship care is not possible. Special needs children often include those over the age of 5, members of a

minority racial group or sibling group, and/or a child with a physical, mental or emotional disability. Children with special needs generally are eligible for additional services as well as financial assistance if they are adopted from foster care.

**Substantial Compliance:** This term is most often used to describe a parent who has satisfied the terms and conditions of his or her case plan, to a significant degree, by successfully addressing the issues that caused the child to come into care. For example, a parent may be in substantial compliance with a case plan if she obtains suitable housing or completes a drug treatment program.

**Termination of Parental Rights (TPR):** A judicial proceeding freeing a child from all custody and control by a parent so that others may adopt the child. A judge determines that a parent has failed to provide a safe home and that the parent has not substantially complied with the case plan in the time allotted by law. A parent may surrender parental rights voluntarily or a judge may revoke them in a judicial procedure. Federal law requires states to initiate TPR proceedings for children who have been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, infants determined to be abandoned, or cases in which a parent has killed another of his/her children, or certain other egregious situations. States may opt not to initiate TPR if the child is in a relative's care, the child welfare agency has documented a compelling reason that TPR would not be in the child's best interest, or the state has not provided necessary services to the family.

**Therapeutic Foster Home:** A special type of foster home for children with a higher degree of emotional, behavioral, physical or medical needs who may also require a higher level of supervision and treatment. Therapeutic foster parents often receive more extensive training and higher compensation than traditional foster parents do.

**USCIS:** United States Department of Immigration and Naturalization Services - Parents must meet strict requirements and be approved by USCIS in order to bring a child into the United States which begins with the completion of the Foreign Adoption form known as the I-600.