



Employee NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
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The Facts, Costs and Decisions Associated with Adoption

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November is National Adoption Month, a time to raise awareness about the urgent need for adoptive families for children and youth within the United States. It's meant to encourage the public to learn more about adoption, hold and attend adoption-related events and learn from those whose lives have already been positively impacted. The mission is to celebrate the families who have grown through adoption and to recognize the many children still waiting for forever families.

In the United States, the first major adoption-related effort occurred in Massachusetts in 1976 when Governor Mike Dukakis proclaimed the first week of November "Adoption Week" to promote the need for more adoptive families. In 1984, President Gerald R. Ford made Adoption Week and by 1998, the week had become so widely recognized that President Bill Clinton extended the event to National Adoption Month.

The process of adopting a child can be a long, complicated, and emotional ride with more legal and financial obstacles than people may initially assume. But as most adoptive parents will tell you, it's a deeply fulfilling journey that they feel is right for them and their family.

By the numbers

- According to Adoption Network, 1 out of every 25 U.S. families with children have adopted. Half of these have biological and adopted children.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that on any given day, almost 424,000 children are living in the U.S. foster care system and that number continues to rise. Over 122,000 of these children are eligible for adoption and they will wait an average of 4 years for an adoptive family.

Making the decision to adopt

There are many factors that families need to consider before deciding to adopt. Some families consider adoption after struggling with infertility issues or are looking for a way to offer help to children in need. There is much for families to think about and learn in order to prepare themselves emotionally to bring an adoptive child into their family. Resources from the Child Welfare Information Gateway can help you learn about adoption and prepare for the adoption process: www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adoptive/before-adoption/

One of the best things you can do as a prospective adoptive parent is to talk to other families about their decisions and experiences, which can provide greater insight into the whole process from someone who has personally gone through it. Connecting with others is one way to determine if, and what type of adoption, is right for you. You can reach out to your lawyer or agency and ask if they can connect you with any adoptive parents they've worked with in the past. Asking questions will help you prepare for the journey to come.

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Know your reasoning for adopting

Before embarking on the adoption process, you should be clear about your motivations for doing so. This decision is not one that should be made lightly, so taking the time to consider the impact this will make on your family and on the life of the child is key. Below are some common questions to help you identify whether and what kind of adoption is right for you:

- Is it important to you to parent a newborn, or are you open to adopting an older child? What about a sibling group?
- If you are matched with a child of another race or background, are you prepared to educate yourselves on the nuances of becoming an interracial or intercultural family?
- How much contact are you comfortable having between you and your adopted child and their birth family?
- What are the adoption laws in my state?

Types of Adoption

There are two kinds of adoptions that a potential adoptive family can consider:

- **Closed Adoption:** When the birth parent(s) and adoptive family have limited or no information about each other and do not stay in contact after the adoption process is finished. People may choose closed adoptions in order to have more privacy.
- **Open Adoption:** When the birth parent(s) and adoptive family meet each other before the adoption and continue to build a relationship as the child grows up. (Most adoptions in the U.S. are open.)

What are the laws surrounding adoption?

Adoption is legal and binding. All adoptions must be approved by a judge in court. Adoption laws are different in every state. An adoption counselor, agency or lawyer can help you understand the laws where you live and guide you during the process.

Understanding the cost

Adoption through foster care is essentially free and may come with various subsidies, but the cost associated with other paths can be considerable and can run into the tens of thousands of dollars. This cost covers fees for services provided by social workers, attorneys, the agency, and others. Saving up for this in advance can reduce the financial strain on a family.

Becoming a foster parent

Do you want to offer a safe and loving home to children in need but are not quite ready to permanently expand your family? All types of foster parents are needed in every part of the United States. When in foster care, children are provided with a safe, nurturing and loving family for a temporary period of time. The aim of foster care is not to adopt children, but to offer them a home while they need it given their family circumstances. The key qualifications of a foster parent are being able to meet the physical, emotional and mental needs of a child. All foster parents in the United States must be licensed or approved in order to provide care for children.

Resources are available for you

All in all, the most important person in the adoption is the child, not the adult. Throughout the entire process, every effort should be made to ensure that the best possible outcomes secured for the child.

For more resources, reach out to your local adoption agencies and contact your EAP. The EAP can help you with the adoption process and decision making with legal, financial and counseling referrals.