



How to Adopt a Baby

(A Guide to Becoming an Adoptive Parent)

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Content

Introduction

Chapter 1 Criteria Requirements to
Become an Adoptive Parent

Chapter 2 Questions to Ask Yourself
When Considering Adopting
a Baby

Chapter 3 Preparing an Adoption Plan

Chapter 4 What Kind of Adoption

Chapter 5 Choosing the Right Adoption
Professional

Chapter 6 Costs Related to Adopting a
Baby

Chapter 7 Home Study Procedure

Conclusion

Introduction

The laws and policies which regulate who are actually able to adopt a child will vary from state to state, as well as from agency to agency. But there are certain requirements that almost all adoption agencies will be looking at when they talk to those people who would like to adopt a baby.

What is important to know, however, is that, although the provisions required by laws in each state can not be either changed or ignored. But there are very few, if any, requirements or rules which are not inflexible.

However, if you do find yourself during the adoption process having problems with a particular rule or guideline, then it might be advisable if you can see if that particular one can be waived. You may be surprised that there are certain exceptions where this can occur, if the circumstances are right, or the right people have asked for it to be waived.

Although you may think that you have the right to adopt, this is simply just not the case. No one in today's society has the absolute right to adopt a child, and can only do so after they have met certain criteria that both the adoption agencies and the government place.

It is therefore important that any prospective people wishing to adopt a baby should carry out as much research as possible on the subject. Learn everything about the rules, regulations and guidelines that can be imposed upon prospective adoptive parents by the various adoption agencies.

In this book, we will be taking you through the basics of what is required in order for a couple or single person to become an adoptive parent.

Chapter 1 –

Criteria Requirements to Become an Adoptive Parent

In this chapter, we will take a closer look at the criteria a couple, or a person, will need to meet in order to become the parent(s) of an adopted baby.

Mandatory Legal Requirements

These are requirements in regard to legal and procedural matters which have been imposed by the State and County where the actual adoption will be taking place. Normally, it is the requirements of the state and county where the parents reside, rather than where the baby was born. But be aware that there are some states whose courts will allow a baby's adoption to be processed in them even if the parents are not residents in that state.

Unfortunately, you will find that it is very difficult to get any of these requirements either modified or waived by the state where they have been put in place.

Preferred Agency Requirements

These are the requirements which are imposed by each adoption agency around the country. Their requirements are ones which are above and beyond those that have been imposed by the state laws

governing adoption matters. Such requirements will vary from agency to agency, and will be based on what the agency actually focuses on. Also, the requirements that these agencies have in place will depend on the type of adoptions that they handle, and what economic and human resources they have available to them. Plus, the requirements that these agencies have in place will depend upon the businesses social philosophy, and whether they have commercial, non profit or public businesses providing them with support.

What should be noted by any person wishing to adopt a child is that these agencies are allowed to set their own individual sets of criteria which must work within the framework of their charter. Plus, they also have the right, if they so wish, to make changes to, or waive certain criteria that they have in place if the circumstances call for it.

One criterion you may find that a lot of adoption agencies have in place is that they will not allow people over the age of 40 to adopt. Often there are valid reasons as to why an agency has placed certain restrictions on people who are wishing to adopt a baby. Therefore, any would-be adoptive parent(s) will need to spend some time looking for an agency which has a set of requirements that they feel comfortable with.

Birthparents Requirements

These requirements are especially important when the adoption is an independent or "open" one. We will be taking a closer look at the various kinds of adoptions that take place a little later in this book.

Today more than ever, birthparents are actually playing a role in which families are chosen to

adopt their child. What this then means is that they can actually impose certain criteria on the agency to ensure that the right adoptive parents have been chosen, in order to meet their requirements.

However, it does provide those with the chance, if they want to, of walking away from any potential adoption if they do feel that they are unable to meet the requirements that have been imposed upon them by the birthparents. Certainly no parent can be forced to place a child up for adoption if they do not find the terms being provided as being acceptable. However, the requirements of the birthparents of a child who is being adopted through a public agency are often absent from such proceedings. This is because in most cases, the rights of the child's birthparents have already been terminated by a court legally when the child comes up for adoption.

Adoptive Parents Limitations

At some stage, all people wishing to adopt a baby or child will have certain limits when it comes to adopting, that they will not cross. All of these they have imposed upon themselves, and will take into consideration such factors as:-

1. Financial Issues
2. Their age
3. Their health

In addition, a number of other criteria and limitations that they consider important to ensure that, when adopting a baby or child, they provide it with the best life possible. Often, the additional limitations and requirements they place upon themselves will be dependent on just how comfortable they are with regards to the adoption.

Often those parents who do not feel good about a certain situation, or the requirements that they need to meet, will often not move forward with an adoption.

Chapter 2 –

Questions to Ask Yourself When Considering Adopting a Baby

If you are a couple who is starting out for the first time in adopting a baby, then congratulations are in order! However, it is important that you learn as much as possible about what adoption is. You also need to understand the commitment that you will be making, and that it is going to be for the rest of your life. Plus, it is important that you learn everything there is to know about the legal processes all would-be adoptive parents have to go through in order to adopt a baby.

Today, there are newborns, as well as teenagers who are looking to be adopted, often because their birthparents (biological parents) are unable to raise them on their own. Or it may be that these children need to be in homes where there will be loved and needed, and that time can be committed to providing them with a stable and permanent family environment.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of people across the globe have chosen to adopt a child for a number of different reasons.

1. It may be because they have wanted to adopt a child for longer than they could remember.

2. They have decided to adopt a child, as they are unable to have a child of their own.

3. It may be because they have family connections, which provides them with the opportunity to adopt a child. Often, this happens in the cases where a couple has remarried, and has children from a previous marriage, and they wish them to take on the identity of the new family.

However, when you are considering adopting a baby, there are certain questions that a would-be adoptive parent should be asking themselves. By asking these, they will then find out if they are willing, and are prepared to face the challenges and the joys of becoming a parent to another person's baby or child.

The questions any would-be adoptive parent(s) should be asking themselves are as follows:-

1. Just how do they feel about not being related genetically to the child?

2. When the subject comes up, how do they feel they will be able to discuss the matter of the child's adoption at a later date?

3. How can they help the child to understand why they were placed up for adoption, especially if there is little information available about them, or they were abandoned, or their life before being adopted was very difficult?

4. As an adoptive parent, will you be willing to allow the child to maintain their own identity in relation to where they come from, and what kind of cultural background they have?

5. As an adoptive parent, will you be willing to deal with all issues relating to the baby's birthparents?

As well as the questions you should be asking yourself above, there are other questions that need to be asked in relation to trans-racial adoption, international adoption and if you are going to be a lone parent adopting a baby.

Once you have been able to answer these questions, you can now move on to the next stage, which is preparing a plan that will help you to manage the various stages of the adoption process.

Chapter 3 –

Preparing an Adoption Plan

Certainly one of the most important steps any adoptive parent will take is to establish an adoption plan. It is this plan which will help to ensure that the adoption process is a much more pleasant experience for both them, and the baby that they wish to adopt. It is this plan which will guide them through the processes of contacting the adoption agencies and professionals, as well as finding out details of the child, and any other person that you are likely to come into contact with during the adoption process.

It is a well known principle that people are likely to fail if they do not plan things correctly. Therefore, if you really want to succeed at becoming an adoptive parent, you need to set yourself goals and make a plan in order that these can then be achieved.

When putting a plan together, there are certain things which you will need to take into consideration. Remember, when it comes to adopting a baby, this is not just a process that, once the baby is at home with you is completed, but rather is a set of processes that you will have to be dealing with until the child has grown up and left home.

Remember that when it comes to adopting a baby, this will end up changing your life forever, and certainly for those parents who are unable to have

children of their own, will add a whole new dimension to the way they view their lives in the future.

It is important that any would-be adoptive parent should not limit just what kind of child they should be adopting. For many parents who are looking to adopt a child, it is important that they resist the urges to only consider a small group of children that they would be willing to adopt. You may well discover that you can be more fulfilled if you actually adopt a child who you would not otherwise have considered as being suitable.

Also, there is no reason why you should not take into consideration adopting more than one child. Unfortunately, a lot of parents will not consider the fact that they actually have the right to adopt more than one child, or they just do not include this option with any plans that they may have in place.

When it comes to preparing your plan, there are certain things you will need to include within it.

1. What kind of adoption it is you wish to do?
2. Selecting the right adoption professional or agency
3. The costs of adopting a baby.
4. Going through the home study process
5. How to find a child

In the next few chapters, we will be looking at the above stages of setting up a plan in more detail to help you with learning about how to adopt a baby.

Chapter 4 –

What Kind of Adoption

Today, there are many different ways in which people are able to adopt a child. However, the first thing any prospective adoptive parents should be doing is to explore their own capabilities, as well as learning more about what the adoptive baby or child will need.

In this chapter, we will now be taking a closer look at the various adoption options a couple, or a single person, will have when it comes to adopting a baby or child.

Domestic Adoption

These adoptions are ones which are arranged through licensed agencies, attorneys, adoption professionals or even a doctor. When choosing this type of adoption, a couple, or single person, is able to choose a child whom they feel will be suitable, and will fit into their family situation. With this type of adoption, it is normally the parents of the child who is up for adoption that will choose the type of family that they wish their child to be adopted by.

With this kind of adoption, the parents of the child, as well as those who are adopting them, will be making decisions together about the future of the child. They will discuss just what kind of contact the child will have with its biological parents in the future, if any.

Inter Country (International) Adoption

This is where the parents of the child to be adopted resides and are citizens in one country, and the people wishing to adopt reside, and are citizens in another.

Because the governments of both these countries will actually be involved in the adoption process, then it is advisable for the parent to take a look at the requirements that their country requires in relation to international adoptions. For the USA, a would-be adoptive parent who wishes to consider this kind of adoption option should visit the State Department's website. Through this, they will learn whether the country they wish to adopt from is legally allowed to take place in the USA. In most cases, a lot of children which are adopted in this way will often be found in either privately, or state run orphanages in the country where they reside.

It is important to remember that in many cases, babies and children which are adopted using this option will have been raised in a different kind of culture from their adoptive parents. Therefore the parents will need to learn everything about the culture they have been brought up in, as well as learning about their language and the kinds of foods that they eat. This will then help to ensure that the child is still provided with their own sense of identity in relation to where they come from originally.

Kinship or Relative Adoption

This is another type of adoption which can take place, and is the type where a family will adopt a child who has ties to their family, or through a relationship that a child has with that family. Such adoptions include those where a stepmother or stepfather has adopted their new partner's children. Grandparents who have adopted their children's children for some reason (maybe the parent's were killed in an accident or they feel that the couple is unable to cope with bringing up the children themselves). It may be a family friend or even a teacher that adopts a child if, for example, they have found that the child's biological parents are in fact unable to care for them.

With all these kinds of adoptions, a licensed professional is required in order to ensure that all the legal requirements relating to an adoption are met, and to ensure that it is finalized using the right procedures.

Domestic Adoption from State Foster Care

The children who are adopted using this option will have spent some time in either temporary foster care, or another welfare situation. In a lot of cases, the agencies will often want to arrange for numerous siblings to be adopted together, as well as loan children. Unfortunately, these kinds of children will have often come from a very difficult background, and will not understand about what commitment is, and so they will require more attention and commitment than others.

Parents who decide to adopt children through this method will find that they are provided with access to many Government benefits. Including Medicaid,

subsidies for finding the right kind of tutoring for the child, and other requirements to help the child transfer into a more permanent and loving environment.

Along with the above adoption options, there are a number of others that need to be taken into consideration as well, and these are as follows.

Open Adoption

This is where the birth parents are able to specify the kind of family which they feel is the most appropriate for the child to be placed with. The birth parents will be able to meet with the family that they have chosen, and be able to identify information which can then be shared between both sets of parents. With this type of adoption, the parents will constantly be in contact over the years, and so both sets will need to ensure that they are willing to make a life long commitment to the child that is being adopted.

Semi Open Adoption

With this kind of adoption procedure, the birth parents again have the right to specify certain characteristics or traits that they want the adoptive parents to have. Also the birth parents have the right, if they wish, to meet with the adoptive parents either before the baby is born, or after the placement has taken place. Once the child has been adopted, then the birth parents have the right to receive pictures or letters from the adoptive parents, but must be passed through the agency and not directly.

Close Adoption

This is certainly the more common type of adoption option that many would-be prospective parents and birth parents will choose to use. But with this particular one, the birth parents will often have little or no control over who their child is placed with when they are adopted. Certainly with this kind of adoption, the birth parents will find that they do not get provided with information on how their child is fairing, or where they will be residing once they have been adopted. Plus, the adoptive parents may find that they are provided with very little information with regard to the child's social history before they adopted them.

At the end of the day, the type of the adoption a prospective adoptive parent chooses, will then determine the kind of professional that they will be working with during the adoption process. In the next chapter, we will be looking at the kinds of professionals who get involved in adoptions.

Chapter 5 –

Choosing the Right Adoption Professional

When it comes to choosing the right kind of person or agency to help you with the adoption process, there are certainly things that a would-be adoptive parent should be looking for.

First, it is important that you compile a list of all those professionals who you feel are able to meet certain basic requirements that you have. This should be just what kind of adoption it is you are looking at, where they are located and how much they charge to help carry out the procedures involved in a couple wanting to adopt a baby or child.

Next, you will need to be asking certain questions of them in order to ensure that they do not have requirements which are likely to invalidate your chance of becoming an adoptive parent.

1. Do they have certain requirements that any would-be adoptive parents need to meet in relation to their professional status, their marital status, their age(s), along with details regarding health issues and what kind of income they have coming in to the home?

2. Just how long does it take for them to arrange an adoption for the prospective parents?
3. What pre and post adoption services do the agency, or professional, provide to both the biological and adoptive parents?
4. Does this particular agency or professional provide the prospective adoptive parents and biological parents with a free consultation?
5. For how long have they been in business, and how many adoptions have been completed, and how many have failed?
6. Just how long should a couple expect to wait before the baby they wish to adopt becomes available?

Once all these questions have been answered by the professional, you will then need to arrange for them to provide you with an itemized list of all fees and costs that they anticipate you will need to pay during the adoption process. It is essential that you have a clear understanding of what is included within their fees, and what is not. You may find that you will need to pay additional fees or expenses for the birth mother, as these may not be included within those that the agency provide to you.

Also, look at choosing an adoption agency or professional where their child's biological parents have some involvement in their child's adoption. Generally, the results that occur using this method are much better than those where the biological parents have no involvement whatsoever.

Also you need to discover what information that agency or professional who is carrying out the adoption has on the child's health, as well as their medical history.

As well as the above, when it comes to choosing the right kind of adoption agency or professional, would-be adoptive parents should ensure that they are able to see a copy of the contract that they use for all adoptions. If no contract is provided, then it is best to walk away from such an agency or professional, as often they are carrying out such adoptions illegally, and this could result in problems for the adoptive parents in the future.

Also, enquire of them whether they have had any of the adoptions they carried out previously overturned, and the reasons why this has occurred?

Any reputable adoption agency or professional should be willing to provide as much information as possible about themselves, as well as about any prospective child. You should also look at asking them if they have any facilities in place where, if you require counseling yourself, you can readily obtain it, and just what qualifications they hold in regards to placing children and babies up for adoption.

Finally, you should ask the agency or professional if there is anything else that they feel is important that you, as a prospective adoptive parent, should know about.

Any reputable adoption agency or professional should be willing and open about all aspects of their business.

Chapter 6 –

Costs Related to Adopting a Baby

The actual cost of adopting a baby will vary from agency to agency, and state to state. For some, it may cost a couple nothing, while others it may cost up to \$40,000.

The factors which are going to affect just how much the adoption will cost include the following:-

1. The type of adoption
2. The type of agency or professional used to facilitate the adoption.
3. The child's age, and the circumstances from which they have been brought up in.

Therefore it is essential that all prospective adoptive parents check out each agency or professional that they are considering using to help with the adoption. By doing this, they will be able to find out more about the specific costs in relation to their particular situation and circumstances.

Below, we provide a list of the range of costs a parent can expect to pay in relation to the different kinds of adoption options available to them.

1. Foster Care - \$0 to \$2,500
2. Licensed Private Adoption Agencies - \$5,000 to more than \$40,000
3. Independent - \$8,000 to more than \$40,000
4. Facilitated or Unlicensed - \$5,000 to over \$40,000
5. Inter Country (International) - \$7,000 to \$30,000

Although these figures may seem a little daunting at first, it is important that, as a prospective adoptive parent, you should explore all the adoption options and the costs associated with them. In fact in some cases, you may well discover the maximum figure provided above can be a lot less. Also, you may find that there are certain resources that you can avail yourself of which can help to offset the costs that you are facing during the adoption procedure.

Also you should break the costs (in total) down into different categories in order that you are able to understand what exactly is involved in the procedure, and will help you to determine the range of costs that you are likely to be faced with. Plus, being able to understand the different types of costs involved with the different adoption options will then help you decide which option is best for you.

The types of expenses that any prospective adoptive parent is going to be facing in the future, when adopting a baby, include the following:-

1. Universal Expenses

These are fees that all adoptive parents are going to have pay, and will include both home study expenses, as well as court costs. However, there are some cases where these may be offset and be reimbursed at a later date.

2. Legal Fees

Whether it is a domestic or inter-country (international) adoption, it will need to be finalized in a court of law in any state in the USA. However, you may find that with some of the inter-county adoptions, these can also be finalized in a court where the child originally comes from. However, in such cases, these then do not need to be finalized in a USA court of law, but many parents often opt to do this in order to provide them with additional protection for the future. Generally, the costs for the legalization of the adoption in court will cost between \$500 and \$2,000. But you will then need to include fees for your legal representation during the court hearing, and these can range from \$2,500 to \$12,000 or even more, depending on which state the adoption is being carried out in. However, you may find that in some places, the adoption can be finalized without the adoptive parents needing legal representation.

3. Adoption Specific Expenses

These will be fees that the prospective adoptive parents will need to pay on top of the universal expenses that have been described above. This includes the costs for the various different adoption options would-be adoptive parents can choose from.

However, there may be resources available to you as an adoptive parent, which can help to provide you with additional funds to meet these costs. You may discover that you are entitled to one, or some, or even all of the following to help with the costs involved in adopting a baby.

1. Tax credits
2. Subsidies
3. Employer Benefits
4. Loans or Grants

So it is important that you carry out as much research before hand when making the decision to adopt a baby so that you know just what it is going to cost you, and what ways, if any, that these costs can be alleviated.

But what is also important to remember is that, not only will you be incurring costs during the adoption process, but you will be faced with costs that you will need to pay once the child has been adopted and becomes a member of your family. Prior to deciding to adopt a child, you need to take into consideration the actual cost of brining up a child from the day that they take up residence in your home, to the day they leave, or when they actually start to earn money for themselves.

Chapter 7 –

Home Study Procedure

Once a couple, or person, has applied to adopt a baby, then they will need to undergo a home study. It is through this that the agency or professional will be able to evaluate and determine the following factors.

1. The person's desire or commitment to adopting a baby.
2. They will explore just what are their reasons for wishing to adopt a baby.
3. It provides them with a chance to evaluate you as a parent.
4. It helps them to educate the prospective adoptive parent, or parents, about what adopting a baby or child entails.

Although there is no set format for the way in which home studies are carried out by adoption agencies or professionals, they do, however, need to follow certain regulations that have been set out by the state. But as long as they follow these regulations, the agency or professional is entitled to set up their own specific application package, policies and procedures that they use.

At the end of the home study period, a written report is then provided by a social worker, who has met with the prospective adoptive parents on

several occasions. They will arrange to meet each of the prospective parents individually, as well as together. Plus, one of the meetings that will take place will be held at the prospective adoptive parents own home.

Generally, the whole home study process will take between 3 to 6 months in order to complete, but sometimes it may take longer or less time, depending upon the agency or professional being used. Plus, the time it also takes to complete will also depend on the actual state where the prospective parents are residing.

Generally, the information that is required when the home study procedure is put in to place, once the application has been made, include the following:-

1. Details relating to the couples personal and family backgrounds. They will want to know about the way in which the couple was brought up themselves, if they have any brothers or sisters, what major events that are key to the way they were brought up and what they have learned from these events.
2. They will want to know about people who are considered to be significant in the adoptive parent's lives, and why they are so significant.
3. Everything about their marriage and the kinds of relationships they have with their family members.
4. What has motivated them to become an adoptive parent?
5. What expectations do they have for the child that they adopt as they grow up?

6. What feelings they have for the baby that they are going to be adopting?

7. They will want to learn about the couple's parenting skills, and the ways in which they are going to be able to integrate the adopted child in to their family, especially if they already have other children.

8. What kind of family environment the adopted baby or child will be going into.

9. The agency or professional will, through home study, learn about the applicant's health. This includes looking at their history. Plus, they will want to know about how they will deal with health issues of the adopted baby; including what insurance coverage they will have in place, and who will be taking care of the child when the parents are not around, or if they are both working.

10. They will also carry out full background checks on each of the adoptive parents to be sure that they have no criminal records. Plus, they will want to obtain references from friends, family and employers.

It is important, however, to note that the home study is there to help the prospective parents to become aware of their own particular traits and behaviors, and find ways in which they can be changed, or ways in which they can live with them once the baby becomes part of the family.

Conclusion

As you will soon discover, there are many steps involved in the adoption process which are common to the types of adoptions that are available today. But what is important to remember, however, is that the adoption laws will often differ from state to state, as well as from country to country.

In order to find out just what these are, you should speak with a State Adoption Specialist in relation to where the adoption is taking place. While, when it comes to international adoptions, you will need to contact the US State Department in order to find out what the laws and regulations are.

Also, remember when it comes to choosing an agency or professional to help you adopt a baby, it is important that you talk to others who have used their services before. There are plenty of places online where you can chat with other parents who have adopted before, whether it is in the USA, or from another country.

But at the end of the day, it is you who will know just what you are capable of, and what it is you can offer to a baby which is being placed up for adoption.

However, there are certain guidelines used by most adoption agencies and professionals, and which are common to whatever type of adoption option you choose. Details of these can be found on many sites that offer advice and help in relation to how to adopt a baby.

But hopefully the information contained within this book will help to give any prospective adoptive parent a better understanding of what is required of them when it comes to adopting a baby.