



# Adoption FAQ

for Expectant/Birth Mothers



# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Adoption Fees & Services FAQ.....	2
Is adoption free for birth mothers?	
What kind of financial assistance will I receive?	
Ongoing Counseling	
Designing an Adoption Plan	
Medical Care	
Financial Aid	
Legal Assistance	
Can I Choose the Family for my Baby? .....	4
What is Open Adoption? .....	5
How Should I Tell Family and Friends the News?.....	6
Does the Biological Father Need to Consent to Adoption?.....	7
What Will my Child Think of Me? .....	8
When is my Adoption Decision Final? .....	9
What Happens in the Hospital?.....	10
What Will Happen After the Adoption Takes Place? .....	11
Where Do I Start?.....	12



## Introduction

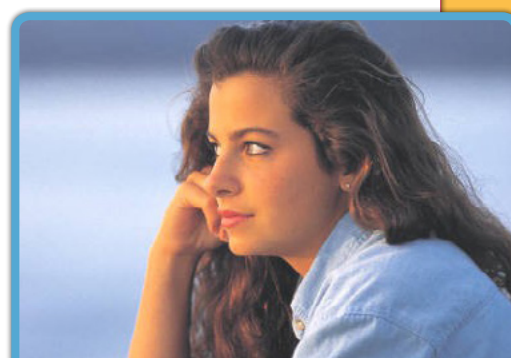
You are a woman facing an unplanned pregnancy. More than that, you are brave and considerate for taking the steps to learn more about adoption. Adoption is a selfless, loving choice that allows you to make a plan for your baby – such as finding a stable, caring family to raise him or her – and to give your child the best possible life you can give at this time.

Picture your child five or ten years from now. Maybe you picture your child in a stable home with a big backyard, with siblings and loving parents. Maybe you see your child taking dance classes, or succeeding in school and sports. Whatever you see, do you see yourself in that picture? If you envision your child in a place that you cannot realistically get him or her, you may be considering adoption.

Now, picture yourself five or ten years down the road. Maybe you would like to go to or finish college, get a good job that supports you, travel, or get married. Maybe you have long-term goals you would like to accomplish before starting a family. If you are not ready to become a parent right now, adoption may be a positive option for you.

It is important to know that adoption is not an easy decision. It is a decision that many expectant mothers make with a heavy heart full of love, in the best interests of their children. Right now, you might have many questions about the adoption process. What should you expect? How will you know adoption is the right choice? What kind of adoption plans are available to you?

In this guide, Adoptions With Love addresses some of the frequently asked questions that expectant and birth parents ask when considering adoption. From financial assistance to the rights of your baby's biological father, we are here to educate you on all that adoption involves, and to help you make the most informed decision possible for both you and your child.



### Adoption is Positive

Adoption is a loving choice that allows you to make a plan for your baby's life. You can choose a family for your baby.



## Adoption Fees & Services FAQ

As an expectant or birth mother, you may be wondering, “How much does adoption cost?” as well as “What expenses will be covered for me, if I choose adoption?” These are very important considerations to make as you contemplate your many options. Some pregnancy alternatives can be costly. Parenting a child is also a big financial investment. So, what about adoption?

Right now, you may not be prepared to pay for things like hospital bills and proper prenatal care. You might need financial assistance to continue your pregnancy and to find a safe place to live. Rest assured that, when choosing adoption, you will not have to worry about these costs.

### Is adoption free for birth mothers?

Typically, when you work with a reputable adoption agency, you do not have to pay anything to make an adoption plan. Pregnancy-related expenses and adoption services are usually provided at no cost to birth parents, if allowed by state law. The adoption agency or adoptive family will cover these costs.

Facing an unplanned pregnancy can be overwhelming; you deserve to be supported through this entire journey. That is why, at Adoptions With Love, all adoption services offered to expectant/birth mothers are always free of charge.

### What kind of financial assistance will I receive?

Adoptions With Love is here to ensure that you are completely comfortable with your adoption plan, at every step of the way. We offer an array of adoption services, from pregnancy counseling to temporary living assistance, throughout the various stages of your pregnancy. Some of our services extend beyond birth, as well. On the following page, we outline the different free services offered to expectant/birth mothers making an adoption plan at Adoptions With Love.

### Ongoing Counseling

Unplanned pregnancy can be a very emotional time for women. Birth and adoption can also stir many complex emotions, such as grief, guilt, anger, anxiety, as well as overwhelming love. No woman should ever feel like she is alone in this journey. At Adoptions With Love, we are here for you all the way.

*more →*



## *Adoption Fees & Services FAQ (cont)*

If you choose adoption, you will be offered ongoing counseling services from licensed social workers at your agency. Adoptions With Love extends our support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We help women at all stages of the adoption journey – from expectant mothers who are early in their pregnancy and considering adoption, to birth mothers who placed their child for adoption thirty years ago. Our free counseling services start from the minute you call and continue long-after the adoption has been finalized.

## *Designing an Adoption Plan*

If you would like to move forward with adoption, Adoptions With Love will guide you in making a personal adoption plan that works for you and your baby. We understand that every woman has different wants and needs. Our caring staff can help you choose the best type of adoption plan and find a loving family for your baby. You can also choose and meet an adoptive family, if you wish.

## *Medical Care*

If you do not already have a doctor, Adoptions With Love will help you find quality health care that meets both your physical and emotional needs. We will ensure you have access to a full-service hospital with a caring staff to assist you in giving birth. Adoptions With Love will also cover any uninsured medical expenses upon completion of adoption.

## *Financial Aid*

Experiencing an unplanned pregnancy can be a trying time, not just emotionally – but financially, as well. You should never feel overwhelmed by the added stress of housing or maternity bills. If you are far along in your pregnancy and do not have a safe place to live, Adoptions With Love can cover a security deposit and several months of rent. We can also provide financial assistance to help with utilities, phone, maternity clothing and other bills, as needed.

## *Legal Assistance*

Adoptions With Love provides birth mothers with knowledgeable attorneys who specialize in adoption. We will make sure that the rights of all those involved in the adoption process are respected and upheld.



## Can I Choose the Family for my Baby?

Yes! At Adoptions With Love, you will have the option to select an adoptive family for your baby. This choice brings many birth mothers peace of mind, knowing that they hand-picked the best possible parents to raise their child. Of course, this is completely up to you. If you are feeling overwhelmed, you do not have to make this choice. You can leave it up to your adoption counselor to match your baby with a great family.

If you would like to choose an adoptive family, our caring staff will help you select the right parents to love and raise your child. We will take some time to listen to your needs and understand all that you want for your baby – whether that is a certain family make-up (siblings, two parents) or a family of a specific faith. We will then provide you with tangible profiles of each waiting family that matches your needs. You will have the opportunity to read about their story, family background, hobbies and interests, and look through family photos. Should you go through a profile and have more questions regarding an adoptive family, our social workers will help you to get the answers you need.

No matter which family you choose, rest assured that they will provide a safe and stable home for your baby. All adoptive families go through a very thorough screening process, involving FBI background checks, home visits with a social worker, and interviews with our staff. This “home study process” allows us to get to know each family personally, as well as ensure their home is safe, secure, and ready to raise a child. We go to each family’s home. For most of adoptive families at Adoptions With Love, parenting would otherwise be impossible without adoption.

Expectant/birth mothers can take comfort in the adoption process at Adoptions With Love. Here, you are in the driver’s seat of your adoption plan. Not only can choose the family for your baby, you can also meet them, in person or through a phone conversation, if you wish. Through open adoption, you can also stay in touch with them over the years.



### Choosing a Family

If you are not ready to become a parent, you can choose parents to raise your baby. This choice brings many women peace of mind.



## What is Open Adoption?

Open adoption has different meanings to different people. In general, open adoption means that there is a relationship between a birth mother and an adoptive family. For some expectant mothers, open adoption is as simple as brief contact with the adoptive parents before the baby's birth. For others, open adoption involves contact before and for years after the baby is born. Post-adoption contact can vary greatly, depending on each family and situation. It can involve email exchanges, phone conversations, texting, Skyping, letter and picture updates, or even in-person visits. You have choices in all of this.

As an open adoption agency, every prospective adoptive family at Adoptions With Love agrees to a semi-open adoption. This means that every family will send you personal letters and photo updates of your child as he or she grows. You can access these at any point, if and when you are ready. Most families at AWL, however, are open to some direct, ongoing communication with the birth parents over the years.

There are many benefits of open adoption, for both you and your child. Children in open adoption arrangements generally have a better sense-of-self and identity, understanding who they are, where they came from, and pieces of their family history. Children in closed adoptions – without any contact with their birthparents – often do not have access to this extent of information. Open adoption also gives children a greater circle of support, feeling love from both their adoptive and birth families.

For expectant and birth mothers, open adoption allows you to get to know the adoptive family that will raise your child. You can also find peace of mind in knowing how your child is doing and growing over the years, through ongoing contact with the family.

While there are many benefits of open adoption, it may not be right for everyone. If you prefer a more private and confidential adoption arrangement, know that closed adoption plans are also available to you. We want to help you make an adoption plan that works best for you, so that you feel confident and happy with your decision.



### Open Adoption Benefits

Open adoption allows birth mothers to get to know the adoptive family and stay in touch with their child over the years.



## How Should I Tell Family and Friends the News?

Unplanned pregnancy is not easy to experience— and one of the hardest parts of all is telling family and friends. You may be afraid of how your parents will react, or what your friends might think of you. You may feel pressure into making a certain decision, such as parenting the child, even if it does not feel like the right decision.

It is important to know that you do not have to talk about your pregnancy, or your plans for adoption, with those close to you. Your adoption agency counselor can serve as your main support, if you want things to stay confidential. However, it can help to confide in a trusted friend or family member, if you feel comfortable. Their support can be especially meaningful during this time.

Try to think about “who” in your life is going to be there for you throughout this journey, and who will respect any choice that you make. It is also important to think about “when.” Only you will know when the time is right to tell others. For some women, it helps to talk to loved ones early on, before making any decisions. For others, waiting until the third trimester, or after the baby is born, is best. This allows them to make a decision without the influence of others. If you would like to keep your pregnancy or decision private, that is okay, too. All services at Adoptions With Love are confidential.

If and when you decide to share the news with family and friends, keep in mind that reactions may vary. You may get love and support, disappointment, or even persuasion to try to change your decision. Be prepared, and remember that this is your choice. Whatever you decide, Adoptions With Love will be here for you. Your loved ones may not understand, and if that is the case, Adoptions With Love can help you approach the conversation with them.



### *This is Your Choice*

While you may find great support in telling loved ones about your pregnancy, this choice is completely up to you. AWL is here to talk.





## Does the Biological Father Need to Consent to Adoption?

As you consider adoption for your baby, you may be wondering what rights the biological father has regarding this decision. Does he need to be involved in your adoption plan?

Laws about birth father consent vary state to state. If the father is known, he may be required to establish paternity (provided he meets certain requirements) in order to be involved in your decision. If he does not acknowledge parental rights, or waits too long to do so, he may not have any say in the choice. In some states, if a mother is not married to the biological father, he does not have any parental rights, and therefore is not required to consent to adoption. In several states, if the biological father is unknown, unaware, or unsupportive, you may still pursue adoption without his participation.

Again, the laws regarding adoption, the biological father, and the relinquishment of parental rights will vary depending on your location. It is important to contact adoption professionals who are experts in these state laws. Contact an adoption agency that works nationwide, such as Adoptions With Love, and that has the proper legal counsel to handle expectant/birth father rights.

If you are in contact with the biological father and feel comfortable telling him about your pregnancy or thoughts on adoption, we encourage you to do so. You may find his support especially meaningful in this difficult time. Despite what you may think, he may also want to go through this together, with you. In fact, 80 percent of the birth fathers at Adoptions With Love participated in making an adoption plan. If he supports your adoption decision, he is entitled to the same support and counseling at Adoptions With Love. He likely will have many of his own emotions to work through. He may also choose his own level of openness in the adoption, which may differ from yours.

If you are not in contact with the birth father, or do not feel safe contacting him, Adoptions With Love can contact him through an attorney. We will present him with his legal rights as a father and terminate parental rights as needed.

At Adoptions With Love, birth mothers are encouraged, throughout this journey, to do what is best for them and their circumstance. Whatever you choose to do, you will be supported and respected.



## What Will my Child Think of Me?

Adoption is a big decision that requires great forethought and consideration. Right now, you may be asking yourself: *Is adoption the path for me? What do I want for my child? How will adoption impact my child, and my dreams?* And, perhaps weighing most heavily, *What will my child think of me?*

A common concern among expectant/birth mothers is whether their child will resent them for choosing adoption. This is also a common myth. You see, adoption is typically very positive for children. An estimated 99 percent of adopted children ages five and older know that they were adopted, and more than 90 percent of them report to have positive feelings about their adoption.

Adoption has changed over the years. More than likely, your child will not be held back by your choice to make an adoption plan. He or she will live a life similar to any growing child, and may even fare better in an adoptive home to some extent. Studies show that the majority of adopted children today are more likely to be read to, sung to, and told stories to by their adoptive parents. They are also more likely to sit down for a family dinner each night.

The adoptive families at Adoptions With Love are thoroughly screened and ready to raise a child, so you can know you are placing your baby in a safe, stable, and loving home. Raising a child is these parents' biggest dream. So it is no wonder the adopted child ends up feeling so happy with his or her home life.

As an expectant/birth mom, know that adoption is a special decision made with great love and selflessness. It is putting your child's needs above your own, and giving your child the best possible life you can give at this time – a safe home, financial stability, a loving family, a life of opportunity. This will all be explained to your child as he or she grows.

Choosing adoption does not mean you do not love your child. Rather, it means you love your child so much, you chose to make this sacrifice in his or her best interest. Your child will come to understand this. In fact, the Adoptions With Love staff has heard from adoptees, now young adults, who expressed how thankful they are for the wonderful life their birth parents gave them. You will not be forgotten.



## When is my Adoption Decision Final?

This is a common question from expectant/birth mothers – *When do I have to make a decision? Can I change my mind?* While laws vary by state, no adoption is final until an adoption surrender form is signed. This is a legal document in which birth parents will agree and consent to the adoption of their child. Should you decide that adoption is the best path for you and your baby, Adoptions With Love will guide you through the entire legal process.

To ensure birth parents are confident in their choice, all states do require that birth mothers wait until after the baby is born before signing any legal paperwork. This allows the birth mother time with her baby, time to rest, and time to think about her decision again after birth.

In some places, a birth mother can consent to adoption immediately after giving birth, or right from her hospital bed. In other states, however, there are a certain number of hours or days that must go by before she can sign anything official. In Massachusetts, for example, birth mothers must wait four days before relinquishing their parental rights. Some states require papers to be signed before a judge; in other states, this is not necessary.

Adoption is a lifelong decision, so it is important to take your time in considering your options once more after the baby is born. Some states do allow a “revocation” period, during which you have the right to change your mind about the adoption. It is extremely important that you talk with an experienced adoption attorney and/or your social worker to understand your legal rights in your state.

Adoptions With Love wants all birth parents to feel comfortable and confident in their decision. There is no pressure to make an immediate adoption plan, or to rush to a certain decision. No matter the state in which you live, you can take the time that you deserve.



### Choosing Adoption

In every state, legal adoption papers can only be signed after the baby is born. You have time to make a decision.



## What Happens in the Hospital?

It is completely normal for expectant mothers to feel anxious or nervous about giving birth, or spending time at the hospital. You may be wondering what happens behind those hospital doors. Will you get to see your baby? Who will be in the delivery and waiting rooms?

Since there are so many questions surrounding labor and recovery, it is important to plan ahead for your hospital stay. At Adoptions With Love, we call this making an “adoption hospital plan.”

Your hospital plan informs the hospital staff, the adoptive family, and your adoption agency how you would like your hospital stay to go. It may discuss who you want to be there, how you want to give birth, how much time you want with your baby, and which sentimental items – if any – you would like to keep. It can also detail whether you want to be an anonymous patient, and if you want to allow visitors during your time there.

Your adoption counselor can help you create this plan. Together, we will decide who you want to be in the hospital, whether you want to see, hold, or feed your baby, and whether you would like to name your baby. This will all be decided before your delivery day, so that you can ensure your wishes are known before birth. Your social worker will communicate with the hospital staff in order to make certain your wishes respected.

Adoptions With Love is determined to make the birth experience as comfortable and worry-free as possible for birth mothers. You deserve great care. In addition to making an adoption hospital plan, Adoptions With Love will also help you find a quality hospital and doctor who understands your physical and emotional needs during this journey.



### Hospital Adoption Plans

Before your baby is born, you can make a plan for delivery and your hospital stay. AWL can help you create a comfortable hospital plan.



## What Will Happen After the Adoption Takes Place?

After placing your baby for adoption, you may experience a range of complex emotions. You may feel sad, relieved, anxious and elated all at once. This is completely normal. Your body just went through childbirth – a tremendous physical and emotional experience. Your body will need time to heal. Your heart will need time to heal, as well.

Adoptions With Love understands adoption is a difficult and emotional decision, and that postpartum is a sensitive time. Know that you will have the full support of our caring social workers. Our dedication to you does not end with your child's birth or the adoption placement. We will continue to provide free counseling services.

No matter which type of adoption plan you chose, you can always stay updated regarding your child at Adoptions With Love. Our agency maintains a letter and picture program between birth parents and adoptive families, so that you can receive updates about your child over the years, if and when you would like. These updates often bring birth parents peace of mind, or simply a smile, after the adoption takes place. At Adoptions With Love, we make a point to keep letter and picture updates on file in case you ever desire to see them in the future.

If you have an open adoption plan or would like to reach out to your child's adoptive family, we can help coordinate these arrangements. If you would ever like to change your adoption plan, such as move it from closed to open, we can work with you and the adoptive parents to do so.

In addition to the counselors at Adoptions With Love, many birth mothers find it helpful to have a support network of women who have made this loving choice. Through ongoing workshops and birth mother support groups, Adoptions With Love can help you build these connections. You are never alone.



### Post-Adoption Support

AWL is here for you even after the adoption takes place. Free counseling services, open adoption contracts, support groups, and more.



## Where Do I Start?

Discovering an unplanned pregnancy can feel like an overwhelming and stressful time. You may not know where to turn for help, who to call for support, or how to start the adoption process. The first step is finding a qualified and reputable adoption agency. Adoptions With Love is here for you. As a licensed, non-profit adoption agency, we have been providing compassionate care and support to expectant/birth parents nationwide for over 32 years.

At Adoptions With Love, you will never be pressured into making an adoption plan. We are here to educate you on adoption, and to help you make the best possible choice for you and your baby. Our experienced counselors and trusted adoption attorneys are here to answer your questions, at any time of day, and will help you get started if and when you are ready. We want to make sure you understand your rights, your options, and the resources available to you. If you choose adoption, we can provide financial and medical support at different stages of your pregnancy. We can also help you design the adoption plan that is best for you and your baby.

At Adoptions With Love, we believe an informed decision is the best decision. Before starting your adoption plan, it is important to do your research. There are specific steps you will need to take to place your baby for adoption, depending on where you live. You should never feel as though you are going through this alone. We are here for you.

Whether you just found out you are pregnant, are in your final trimester, or have just given birth to your baby, you can always contact us. That is our promise to you. Call Adoptions With Love toll-free at **1-800-722-7731** or **text us confidentially at 617-777-0072** for more information on making an adoption plan.



*We Are Here for You 24/7*

Adoptions With Love is available anytime of day, any day of the week to answer your call. Call us toll-free at 800-722-7731.