

Adoptions
with Love



*Preparing for Adoption:
A Guide for Adoptive Parents
in Massachusetts*

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Preparing to Adopt

In this guide, you will learn how to apply to adopt a baby in MA, and get expert tips for starting the adoption process.

Introduction



Adoption is a wonderful gift. It is also a big step for any family to take. If you are looking to grow your family through adoption, you may be feeling overwhelmed. You likely have a lot of questions and need somewhere to turn for some basic adoption information, such as state laws, requirements, and tips for preparing to adopt. If you live in Massachusetts and considering adoption, you have come to the right place.

In this guide, Adoptions With Love will share the steps you need to take when applying to adopt a child in Massachusetts, and tips for starting the process. We will also share what to do in your home and ahead of time, to prepare for when your child arrives.

Adoption is an emotional journey. It is one that requires patience, determination, and, of course, plenty of love. There are approximately 14,000 domestic adoptions that take place in the United States each year. The competition can be intimidating. For every child placed for adoption, there are about 36 families waiting to adopt. The wait time can be challenging, especially for those who have struggled with years of infertility and are eager to start a family. It is, however, a journey worth waiting for, as many adoptive parents could tell you.

One move that helps prospective adoptive parents meet their baby more quickly is choosing a licensed, non-profit adoption agency, such as Adoptions With Love. This is a statewide requirement, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Not only this, it is important to find a reputable and reliable agency. Adoptions With Love works with Massachusetts families looking to adopt, yet we also work with expectant/birth mothers from all over the country. This helps us ensure shorter wait times for hopeful parents.

If you are ready to meet your child, read on. We will show you how to prepare for this exciting – and life changing – experience, from the very start.



Massachusetts Adoption

To adopt a baby privately in Massachusetts, hopeful families are required to work with a licensed, non-profit adoption agency.



Getting Started



When you know you are ready to adopt a child, you may find yourself anxious to get the ball rolling. Pace yourself. This is a journey that requires a bit of patience.

The first step toward making your adoption dreams come true is to find an adoption agency that you can trust. Look for a Massachusetts-licensed adoption agency that has experience and empathy for all that adoption entails. It should be staffed with experts who are compassionate, reliable, as well as well-versed in your state's adoption laws.

Adoptions With Love is a non-profit, private, domestic adoption agency that has been placing children with Massachusetts families since 1986. We place children with Massachusetts residents, but we work with expectant/birth mothers from across the U.S. We have attorneys who understand the ins and outs of the many different adoption laws, which all vary by state. This takes a lot of the work and worry off your plate. With an expert team always in reach, you can rest easy knowing that the adoption process will be handled and carried out in a respectful and legitimate manner.

The adoption agency you choose will help you get started in your quest to build a family. Once you make contact, you will be sent an information package and application telling you more about the agency and their specific requirements. When you are ready, you will then set up a private consultation (at no charge) with a caring professional, to talk about your hopes and needs. Your adoption professional will answer your questions .

Your application is just the beginning. From there, you will be contacted again for the next steps in the adoption process. Get excited! You are on your way to adopting your child, whom you will love and create memories with for the rest of your life.



Choosing an Agency

Adoptions With Love is a non-profit, private adoption agency that has been placing children with Massachusetts families for 33+ years.



Adoption Requirements in Massachusetts

As you dive into this exciting journey, you will want to become familiar with the adoption requirements in Massachusetts. With the help of a reliable adoption agency, licensed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, this process becomes easier. Here are some of the most important things to know about when adopting in the Bay State.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires all prospective adoptive parents to undergo an in-depth screening process, which includes background checks, required documentations, and a thorough Home Study process. Other guidelines for adopting in Massachusetts include:

- You are an adult over 21 years of age
- You either rent or own a home
- Your home has adequate privacy, safety, and space for all family members, including your soon-to-be child (children of the same gender may share a bedroom)
- You attend a training course that prepares you for adoption and parenthood
- You provide personal letters of recommendation, in addition to an adoption application
- You complete a home study before being approved to adopt

As part of the home study, you will also be required to submit health records to ensure you are mentally and physically fit to raise a child. You will also be required to submit financial records, to confirm that you are financially stable enough to support a family. Keep in mind: You do not need to be wealthy to adopt, but you do need to be able to provide for the basic needs of a child.

There is equal opportunity to adopt in the Bay State. This means that singles, straight, same-sex and LGBTQ couples are all welcome to adopt. First-time parents must enroll in baby care training sessions to prepare for parenthood. These are often offered through an adoption agency, such as Adoptions With Love.





The Home Study Process

Once your application has been submitted, it is time to prepare for the home study. A home study is a multi-step process, conducted by a licensed adoption agency, that takes a few months to complete. It entails interviews with you and your family and visits to your home.

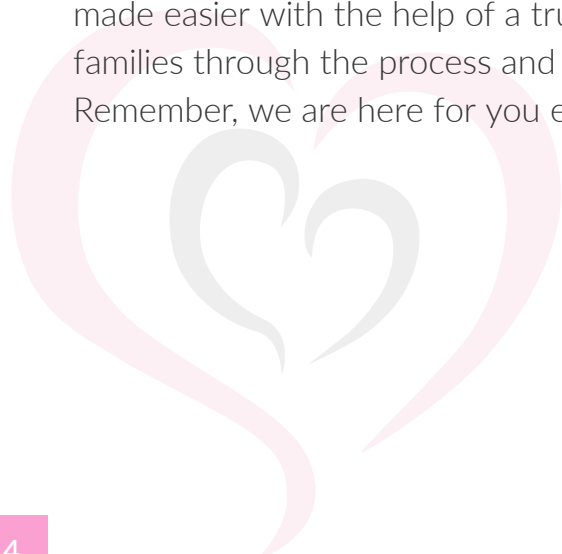
The home study ensures that prospective families are ready to become parents. It also ensures that they can offer a safe, stable, and loving home for a child. The physical, mental, and emotional health of a home is just as critical as financial stability, in determining readiness to parent.

This process is not something to worry about – just be honest and be yourself. The home study process helps your adoption social worker get to know you and your family. In getting to know you, the agency can better match you with an expectant/birth mother and child.

Part of the home study involves creating a profile, which includes family photos and letters to expectant/birth mothers considering adoption. Adoptions With Love can help you build photo albums, offer guidance in writing letters, and share your profile with the women who may be a good match.

Be ready to become an open book. When you open your heart to the adoption process, you may make a special connection with an expectant/birth mother. An expectant/birth mother who likes your profile may request to meet with you in person. This can give you even more opportunity to share your amazing personality and showcase what a loving family you would be able to offer a child.

The home study is an important part of the adoption journey, but it is one that can be made easier with the help of a trusted adoption agency. Adoptions With Love walks families through the process and can answer any questions you may have along the way. Remember, we are here for you every step of the way.





Prepare Your Adoption Profile

Before a birth mother selects a family for her child, she explores prospective adoptive parent profiles. As you get ready to embark on this beautiful journey, you will want to think about your own profile, and how you can make it stand out.

As noted above, an adoptive family profile is a compilation of photos, letters, and information about your family's story. This packet will shed light into your own personal journey toward adoption. If you are in a committed relationship, it can – and should – include your love story. It should also share personality and heart, giving women a sense of who you are and how much love you have to offer a child.

An expectant/birth mother will spend hours reviewing profiles of families who are hoping to adopt. You will want to make sure yours is a memorable one. Share plenty of photos of yourself and your family. These may include family vacations, candid and posed shots at family gatherings, and even favorite pet photos. It should also show photos of you (and your spouse) doing the things you love to do most.

You will also want to include your personal passions and interests, to give a better sense of who you are and what you care about in life. Whether you love to volunteer at the local fire department, travel the world, hike the trails, or jamming out Billy Ocean, be sure to share a piece of yourself with your potential future child's birth mother. The smallest detail, even if it is a funny personality quirk, may speak to her and help her “click” with your adoption profile.

Of course, you will also want to include a letter to the birth mother. This will help you connect with her as a parent, and let her know just how much raising a child will mean to you.



Adoptive Family Profiles

An adoptive parent profile is a compilation of photos, letters and information about your family, for expectant/birth mothers to see.





Preparing the Adoption Story

An important piece of the adoption puzzle is how to approach the topic with your child. Adoption is no longer the taboo topic it once was many years ago. Today, most adoptions are open and, as a result, children are better adjusted. In fact, 90 percent of adopted children over the age of five have positive feelings about their adoption. Naturally, the adopted child's parents play a big role in this happiness.

From the moment you meet your child, you can begin to share her adoption story. From those sweet moments playing in the tub to story-time before bed, you can use the word "adoption" and clap, smile, and generally reinforce a positive association with the word. Even though your child does not yet comprehend what adoption means, this repetitive and playful talk will open the door to bigger conversations down the road. Once your child is a preschooler and can better understand the roles of "mommy" and "daddy," you can explain that mommy and daddy adopted her and loved her from the moment she arrived. As your child grows, you can help her better understand what adoption means with **age-appropriate conversations**.

Another tool to help your child understand her adoption story is to share some basic information about her birth parents. If you stay open and honest, while sharing age-appropriate details of the birth, she will know that she can trust you for help in learning about her heritage. This openness will also help her with self-identity and pride in her roots and adoption story.

As you prepare to adopt, think about how you can honor your child's birth parents and keep a healthy conversation going about adoption along the way, to help your child understand his or her life story.



Adoption is Positive

Today, most children know they were adopted. 90 percent of children over the age of five have positive feelings about their adoption.



Think About Your Adoption Plan

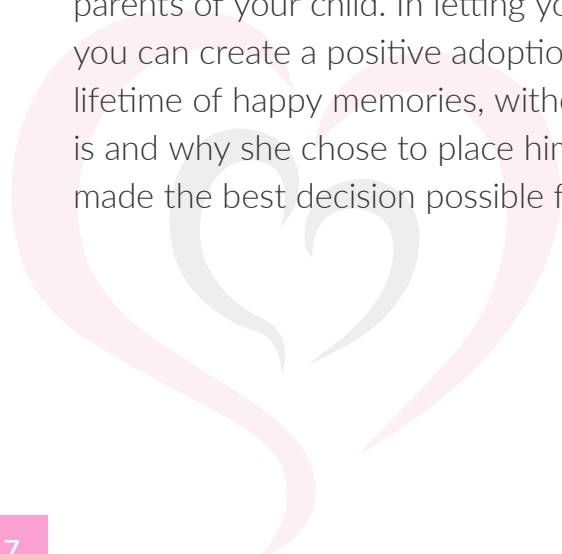


In this day and age, most adoptions are open, or at least “semi-open.” In fact, only five percent of adoptions in the United States are closed. As you prepare for your adoption journey, you should consider the type of adoption plan with which you are most comfortable.

At Adoptions With Love, expectant/birth mothers have the ability to choose a family for their baby. This means that the mothers also determine what type of adoption they have: Open, Semi-Open, or Closed. If an expectant/birth mother decides that she wants to keep in contact with the adoptive family, she will work with her adoption agency and chosen adoptive family to reach an agreement. You will enter a contract that outlines the contact agreement. Perhaps you decide to keep in touch via email or occasional phone calls. Some families bond with the birth mother and decide to host annual, in-person reunions. At Adoptions With Love, all adoptive families agree to send annual letters and photos to the adoption agency, for the birth mother to see if and when she wishes.

Your adoption agency will help you understand the terms of this agreement and make sure that you are comfortable with the arrangement before-hand. The type of communication you maintain with the birth mother may evolve over the years, to accommodate your growing child.

It is a common misconception that birth mothers who are allowed to keep in contact with their child or child’s adoptive family will have a change of heart and try to “take their child back.” This is typically depicted in movies. The truth of the matter is, birth mothers relinquish their legal rights to parent, long before the adoption is finalized by a Massachusetts court. Open adoption does not change this in anyway, but rather, it gives her confidence that her baby is loved. Once the adoption is finalized, you will be the legal parents of your child. In letting your child’s birth mother be a part of your story, however, you can create a positive adoption experience for everyone involved. You can also create a lifetime of happy memories, without your child constantly wondering who his birth mother is and why she chose to place him for adoption. And the birthmother can be confident she made the best decision possible for the baby.



Preparing Your Life for Baby



Although you likely feel prepared for a child emotionally, there are some other factors to consider before diving into parenthood. First of all, you will need to consider your financial health. Today, it costs approximately \$233,610 to raise a child from birth to age 18 – and that figure does not include college tuition.¹ You will also need to consider the support you will have at your place of work, the environment of your town, and how your personal hobbies and lifestyle will change once you become a parent.

Massachusetts ranks high in the list of the most ideal states to raise a family (number two, to be exact), but it also ranks among the most expensive. According to a recent survey, the Bay State has some of the highest costs of child infant care in the country.² While it should not deter you from making the choice to parent a child, it is a factor to take into consideration. Depending on your family's circumstances, some serious financial planning may be needed.

Before pursuing the adoption process, think about the other ways your life will change. Perhaps you enjoy a morning run, or you meet your friends every Friday for Trivia Night at the local watering hole. While you will be able to enjoy your favorite activities more as your child grows, life with baby will be busy and will completely change your life. Once you have your bundle of joy, you will need to consider these changes.



¹ US Dept of Agriculture's stat
www.google.com/amp/s/amp.usatoday.com/amp/357243002

² www.wallethub.com/edu/best-and-worst-states-to-have-a-baby/6513/



Preparing for Baby

As you wait to be matched with a birth mother, take time to prepare your home, your finances, and your priorities before baby arrives.



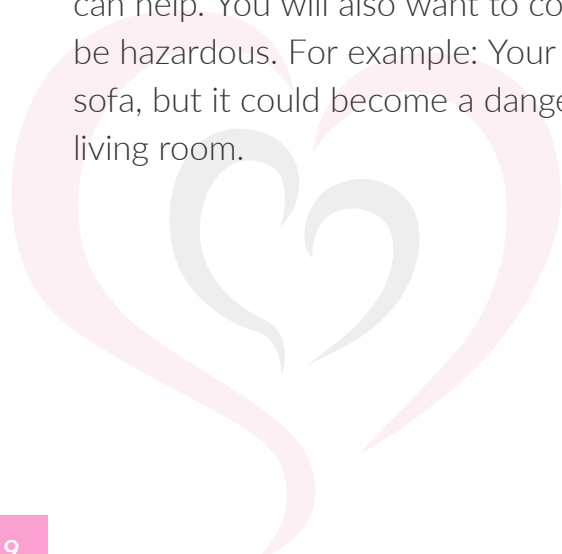
Preparing Home for Baby

Once you decide to adopt, you may be tempted to buy all the cute baby things you have seen flooding your social media newsfeed. While the off-white teepee and dreamcatcher are beautiful, you may want to consider the most practical items on your “must-buy” list first.

Many first-time parents feel that it takes a lot to raise a baby. In reality, baby only needs a few basic things to survive (and thrive): food, clothing, warmth, and comfort. There are, however, many items that will help make life easier for you and your family. If this will be your first child, you may want to create a registry and host an “adoption shower.” Between diapering materials, car seats, bibs and burp cloths, the initial cost of preparing yourself can be significant. A close relative or friend can help you in throwing you an adoption/ baby shower.

Many new adoptive parents choose to have their showers after baby is born. This is for a few reasons. For one, with adoption, the nine-month time commitment does not really apply. There is never really a definite day you will welcome your baby home. By planning the shower for after the baby arrives, you will be able to confidently celebrate that the waiting period is over. This type of shower also gives family and friends a chance to meet baby (while showering him or her with presents) and gives you, a new – and undoubtedly – tired parent, the chance to get all of the baby visits done in one shot.

Once you have prepared yourself for all of the basics you will need to care for baby, you will also want to baby-proof your home. In the Home Study, a social worker will ensure that your house or apartment is a safe setting wherein to raise a child. You will also want to make sure that you are prepared to keep baby safe once he or she becomes mobile. Baby gates, plug covers, drawer locks and moving cleaning supplies to a high cupboard can help. You will also want to consider moving or removing furniture or decor that could be hazardous. For example: Your square glass coffee table may look beautiful with your sofa, but it could become a dangerous object once baby is up and crawling around the living room.





In Conclusion...

As you embark on this incredible journey, get excited for what lies ahead. Through the steps described in this guide, you will have prepared for your adoption in the best way possible, and you will, in turn, be ready to welcome your child home.

The adoption journey is a long one, and many prospective adoptive families find themselves waiting for several months or even years. It is, of course, all worth it in the end. With the help of an adoption agency like Adoptions With Love, you will understand what you need to do to make this adoption happen, and you will be ready for any curve balls that may come your way. You will also learn how to stay positive during the wait period – which, at Adoptions With Love, is approximately 6-12 months.

Adoptions With Love works with expectant/birth mothers from all over the country, and only hopeful parents residing in Massachusetts. This means that there is a shorter wait time than most national agencies, and more personalized support for every member of the adoption triad. Once you have adopted your child, Adoptions With Love will be there to continue to help and support you through the parenting journey. We can coordinate communication with the birth mother, depending on your adoption plan, and facilitate any changes that need to be made as the years go on.

When you are ready to begin your adoption journey, [Contact Adoptions With Love](#) for a free and private consultation. We can guide you through the preliminary application process. We will also answer any questions you may have, whether it is about the adoption itself or our agency. We can help you decide whether adoption is the right step for you, and help you prepare for this incredible journey toward parenthood.

Call us anytime to learn more about adoption at 617-964-4357.



Waiting for Baby

At AWL, the typical wait time is 6-12 months. This is shorter than many other agencies, because we work with birth mothers nationwide.

