

Adoptions  
with Love



A Guide to  
LGBTQ Adoption

# Table of Contents



Introduction .....	1
A History of LGBTQ+ Adoption Laws .....	2
Finding an LGBTQ-Friendly Adoption Agency.....	3
Types of Adoption that LGBTQ Couples Can Pursue .....	4
Questions to Ask a Private Adoption Agency .....	6
Where to Find Adoption Support .....	8
Connecting with Other LGBTQ Adoptive Parents .....	9
How to Talk to Your Child About Adoption .....	10
Talking to Your Child About Family Dynamics .....	11
Conclusion .....	12



## *LGTBQIA Adoption*

In this guide, you will learn about the adoption process for LGBTQ families, adoption laws, where to find support, and more.

# Introduction



Adoption is an act of love, and an incredible way to grow your family. While adopting is an emotional journey, it is important to remember as a prospective parent: Family is not defined by biology. Family is built on **love**.

There is no single definition of a family today. Families can have all different make-ups, and are more diverse than ever before. Today, you will find households headed by single parents, transracial parents, and same-sex parents. You will also find more acceptance of diverse family circles than ten years ago. At Adoptions With Love, all families, of all make-ups, are welcome to apply to adopt.

Thanks to ongoing battles for equality and notable Supreme Court rulings, hopeful parents within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer folks can adopt children. In Massachusetts, any family that successfully completes the home study process can adopt a child.

The definition of “nuclear family” is evolving. [Recent research](#) suggests that more gay couples are adopting today. In fact, same-sex couples are **four times more likely** to be raising an adopted child than their heterosexual peers. An estimated four percent of adopted children are being raised by gay or lesbian parents today, and [two million](#) more people in the LGBTQ community are interested in adopting.

Adoption can be a great option for same-sex couples longing to fulfill their dreams of becoming parents. If you are an LGBTQIA individual looking to grow your family, read on. In this guide, we will share more about the adoption process for LGBTQ families, adoption laws, where to find support, and much more.



## *Adoption is Positive*

Adoption is an act of love and a positive way to grow your family. AWL welcomes families of all make-ups to apply to adopt.

# A History of LGBTQ+ Adoption Laws



Adoption for LGBTQ+ couples has come a long way, but there are still some laws that challenge equality. The Supreme Court ruling of 2015 was a big moment for the LGBTQ community. Mississippi was the last state to **overturn** laws banning same-sex adoption, when a federal judge deemed them unconstitutional in 2016.

Before the Supreme Court's ruling, the laws regarding same-sex marriage and adoption were a mixed bag. Some states allowed same-sex couples to adopt, while others outright banned it. In addition, some states that only allowed one partner in a same-sex couple to adopt the partner's biological child. The Supreme Court ruling was like a weight being lifted from many families' shoulders, however, there have been setbacks since this landmark decision.

There remain some restrictions, from state to state, on adoption laws for gay couples based on marital status. In Massachusetts, however, there are **no restrictions** on adoption. Single parents can adopt a baby just like married couples can adopt. All family dynamics are welcomed, as long as adopting parents are at least 18 years old. You can learn more about [eligibility requirements for adopting a child in your state](#).

Adoption laws, in general, vary from state to state. They can also change through legislation. This is where an adoption attorney proves useful. A full-service adoption agency like Adoptions With Love provides legal services as part of the one, all-inclusive adoption fee. Our adoption attorneys and social workers are well-versed with adoption laws around the country and can help you navigate this process, keeping you informed and helping you understand your rights as an adoptive parent.



## LGBTQ Adoption Laws

In Massachusetts, LGBTQ+ families can apply to adopt a baby. Adoptions With Love provides legal services for hopeful families.

# Finding an LGBTQ-Friendly Adoption Agency



While adoption for same-sex couples is legal in every state, you may find that some adoption agencies that are more LGBTQ friendly than others. Since the Supreme Court ruling of 2015, certain states have passed legislation that gives private adoption professionals the right to discriminate based on sexual orientation.

As you weigh your options and consider growing your family through adoption, you will want to find an adoption agency that is fully supportive of the LGBTQ community.

Adoptions With Love supports all families in Massachusetts in their quest to build their family through adoption. If a prospective adoptive family (or single adoptive parent) successfully completes the home study process, he/she/they can adopt through our organization. The home study process ensures that hopeful adoptive families are in good emotional, physical, mental, and financial health. The goal of the home study is to confirm that any baby adopted is brought into a safe, stable, and loving home. There is **no exception** to that rule when it comes to a parent's sexuality or sexual identity. We understand that this has nothing to do with a person's ability to raise a child.

Do your research ahead of time and find an adoption agency with which you feel comfortable. One couple – John and Jay – shared their experience on choosing Adoptions With Love:

“[We] researched and met with five local agencies, each with their own strengths. One of the benefits of talking to different agencies is that we learned so much about the adoption process... We chose AWL because we really liked the team, we had friends who adopted through them, and that AWL's placement rate was higher than any other agency. We were in our early forties and wanted the potential to adopt sooner rather than later.”

We are proud to offer adoption services to our LGBTQIA+ family. Adoptions With Love understands the challenges that many same-sex couples continue to face, and we want to make the process of adoption easier. We are welcoming to LGBTQIA+ parents and have many years of experience in helping same-sex couples adopt.

# Types of Adoption that LGBTQ Couples Can Pursue



As you begin to research the adoption process, it is important to understand the different types of adoptions available.

To those who are unfamiliar with adoption, it can seem like a very straightforward process. Family adopts baby, signs paperwork to become the baby's legal parents, and lives happily ever after. Simple. In reality, your adoption can be carried out in several ways, including:

- **Joint Adoption** – This involves a married, same-sex couple jointly adopting a child.
- **Single-parent Adoption** – A single person may adopt a child, no matter his/her/their sexuality or sexual identity.
- **Step-parent Adoption** – In this type of adoption arrangement, one partner of a married same-sex couple adopts the other partner's biological or adopted child.
- **Second Parent Adoption** – This entails one partner of a same-sex couple adopting the other partner's biological or adopted child.

These are just the basics. As a prospective parent, you also have the power to choose which adoption path you will take. Today, you can choose between **international adoption**, in which you adopt a child from another country, and **domestic adoption**, in which you adopt within the United States. Domestic adoption is a common choice among U.S. families, as it typically offers shorter wait times, lower costs, and more choices throughout the process.

*"...Don't assume adoption is the same as it was many years ago. Things have changed so much in terms of open versus closed adoptions, and adopting domestically can be much easier than you think with a very reasonable wait time."*

- Adoptive parents, Eric and Rob



## Types of LGBTQ Adoption *continued*

If you decide to move forward with a domestic adoption, you will find even more adoption paths along the way. You will need to consider:

- **Foster care adoption**, in which you may adopt a child through the foster care system.
- **Private adoption**, through a licensed adoption agency. This is typical for families seeking to adopt a newborn baby.
- **Open adoption**, which means you will have contact/a relationship with your child's biological parent(s).
- **Closed adoption**, in which no identifying information is released between biological and adoptive families.

Choosing to adopt through a private adoption agency like Adoptions With Love can provide many benefits. It enables you to have full support and services throughout the adoption process, from the home study to the day of finalization. Licensed, private adoption agencies can also protect you legally and financially throughout the adoption process. [Learn more here.](#)

In addition, many private adoption agencies offer open adoption plans. Open adoption means that you can speak with your child's birth mother, and even maintain contact with her after the adoption is finalized. This relationship can be extremely beneficial for your child, as it can provide access to valuable information about their family history. Open adoption promotes a stronger sense of self for children who were adopted.

The above adoption paths help build families for millions of LGBTQ+ couples today. It is important for you to understand the distinction between these types of adoptions before you begin the process. More than likely, you will have choices like these along the way.



### *Your Options*

LGBTQ families have many choices in the adoption process. Private adoption is a common choice for those looking to adopt a baby.

# Questions to Ask a Private Adoption Agency



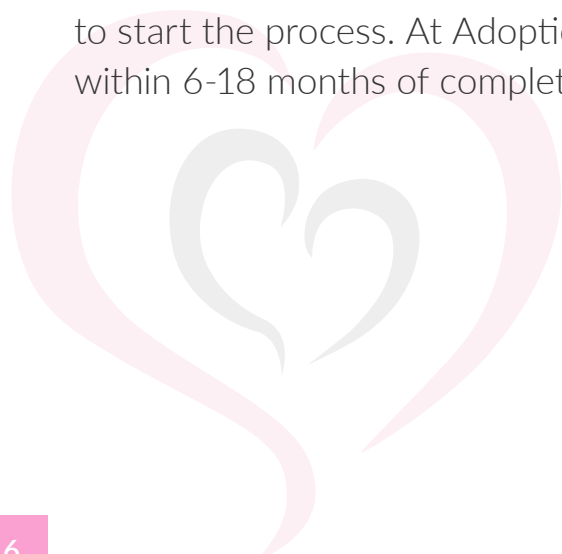
As you set out to pursue your dream of adopting a child, you will want to be prepared. Be ready to ask questions. If you choose a private, caring, and personalized adoption agency like Adoptions With Love, you will have no problem getting the answers you need. Our staff is committed to guiding prospective parents through the adoption process with ease, respect, and total transparency. Still, you may want to have a list of questions prepared ahead of time. Here are some of the most frequently asked questions that LGBTQ+ families ask:

## What should we know before we begin?

Before pursuing adoption, it is important to prepare yourself for the lifelong commitment. Think about how you will handle childcare (if needed), and how you will adjust your lifestyle, financially and in other ways. In addition, it is important to know that adoption is a loving choice made by an expectant/birth mother. Think about how you will portray this to your child, and what kind of relationship you would like to maintain with your child's birth mom. Of course, it is also important to familiarize yourself with the adoption requirements and process in your state – your adoption agency can assist with this.

## Does it take longer for same-sex couples to adopt than traditional couples?

Many gay and lesbian families assume the adoption wait time will be longer for them than their heterosexual counterparts. This is not true. The wait time will depend more on your home study, and adoption agency, and the child you wish to adopt. Check with your adoption agency for more specific wait times when you are ready to start the process. At Adoptions With Love, families typically welcome baby home within 6-18 months of completion of your home study.





# Questions to Ask an Adoption Agency *continued*



## How can we match with an expectant/birth mother?

Your adoption agency will help you match with an expectant/birth mother. As a full-service adoption agency, Adoptions With Love provides comprehensive advertising for prospective parents. We expertly match expectant/birth mothers with the family that best meets her needs. We will help guide you in creating an adoptive parent profile and video, to share with these women. While this can be nerve-wracking, it is important to be yourself. Stay true to who you are and who you will be as a parent. That is the best way you will connect with an expectant/birth mother. John and Jay echo this sentiment, encouraging, “Be yourselves and don’t worry about who might not choose you. The birthmother/father will pick you for who you are and because they relate to you in some way. The right person will choose you.”

## Will children be teased if they have same-sex parents?

Most children experience teasing at some point in their lives for a variety of reasons. Your child may be teased based on appearance, personal interests, athletic ability, or – quite possibly – having gay parents. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, you have probably faced your (un)fair share of discrimination. The good news is that this is something you can help your child prepare for, handle with grace and dignity, and come out on the other side more resilient than ever.

Your adoption agency can ease your mind about any concerns you may have about adoption. Just jot down your most pressing questions and they will be happy to go over them with you.



### *The Adoption Process*

At AWL, adoptive families are typically matched with an expectant/birth mother within 6-18 months of completing their home study.





# Where to Find Adoption Support

Making the choice to adopt a baby is an exciting moment and major milestone for families. It will bring a lot of changes to your life. As the old African proverb goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” It is important, when considering growing your family, to find support. LGBTQ parents may also feel that it is important to find support within their own community. Raising a child – for any parent – is an incredible experience, as well as a challenging one. Raising a child as a same-sex couple may present its own challenges, too.

A trustworthy, LGBTQ+ friendly adoption agency is a great place to turn for support. The expert staff at Adoptions With Love aims to help loving, responsible people fulfill their dreams of becoming parents. We have been placing babies with families (of all dynamics) since our start in 1986. We can serve as your biggest cheerleader throughout the adoption process. Our decades of experience are also a valuable resource for LGBTQ families, as we can answer any questions you may have along the way.

Knowledge is power. In addition to consulting with your adoption professional, there are many helpful websites that can empower you with the information you need. Over the years, [sites like this one may be used as resources for your growing family.](#)

Last, but certainly not least, it is important to have your own personal support team as you prepare to adopt. Find your tribe. They can lend you the support you need, and understand the challenges you face better than anyone else. From the common diaper rash and sleep struggles, to bullies at school and questions surrounding the adoption and family dynamics, a cup of coffee with a fellow adoptive parent can often be the biggest help of all. Your adoption agency can connect you with other adoptive and first-time parents.

Parents John and Jay attest to this, explaining, “We had no idea how valuable it would be to be paired with a group of first-time parents, both before and after the arrival of our son. We became good friends with these families, and although we don’t get together as often as we would like, it has been an important experience for both the kids and the parents.”

# Connecting with Other LGBTQ Adoptive Parents



As mentioned, it is important to connect with other LGBTQ adoptive parents. These initial connections can grow into deep, meaningful relationships throughout your parenting years. You may be asking yourself, “How do I make friends as an adult?” We understand. Making friends as a grown-up can be an awkward mission. It can also feel like a silly task while you are trying to figure out how to raise a child in a heteronormative society.

It is, however, an important piece of the parenting puzzle. As many experienced parents could tell you, parent friends can be lifesavers. Parent friends that are a part of the LGBTQ+ community will be able to relate to you in a way that no other friends can. They will be walking in your shoes and understand the challenges you face.

Eric and Rob, adoptive parents who worked with AWL, suggest: “Talk to someone who has adopted. We were fortunate enough to have two close friends of ours (a same-sex couple) adopt their son as we were considering our own plans for expanding our family. It was extremely helpful to ask them every question we could think of along the way, because different feelings and questions pop up throughout the entire journey.”

In addition to a great adoption agency, you will likely want direct support from those in the LGBTQ+ community in your quest to grow your family. Thanks to the ever-growing trend of social media usage, there are many LGBTQ+ parenting and adoption groups on Facebook. There is also a wide selection of online forums where you may turn. You can find these support groups that are based in your hometown or city, and plan in-person meetups as you feel comfortable.

If you have trouble finding a group that is based in your area, start one. You can easily launch your own Facebook group for free. Your adoption agency can also be a great resource in connecting you with other adoptive families. A big advantage to starting your own parent group is that you have the power to decide who may join. This way, you can connect with people who best align with your values, beliefs, parenting beliefs, and whatever other qualities you deem important for the group. Once you have a group, you may start meeting with these LGBTQ+ parents and forming bonds that will carry through the tough teen years and beyond.

# How to Talk to Your Child About Adoption



Talking to your child about their adoption is important. These ongoing conversations will help your child understand where they come from and who they are as a person. Self-identity is an important part of the adopted child's persona. These conversations will also help you build trust, as your child will count on you to share open, honest, and age-appropriate information.

Many parents wonder **when** to discuss adoption with their child. This question has a simple answer: As soon as you become a parent. Adoptive parents can talk to their little one about adoption as early as the very first day of life. In the infancy phase, it is very easy. Simply using the word "adoption" with positivity and love can help build a great foundation. You can talk about adoption during bath time, bottle feedings, and bedtime. The earlier you start talking, the easier the conversations will be in the future.

When your child becomes a preschooler, they will begin asking many "why?" questions. This is completely normal. It helps to have many and multiple conversations, so that your child can better understand their adoption story. Continue to keep these talks simple in this phase of life, and do not worry about the more complicated questions to come.

With young children, a simple answer like this will satisfy: "Your birth mom loves you, and she chose us because she knew we could take care of you and that we would be the best parents for you...and now we are a forever family!"



## Talking about Adoption

Talking about adoption openly, honestly, and positively has many benefits for a child. Always use loving and age-appropriate language.



# Talking to Your Child About Family Dynamics



If you are in a same-sex relationship, your child will inevitably ask about this parent dynamic, and the biological equation. This is also normal, so try not to stress. Remember to keep your answers age-appropriate and simply remind your child that families are formed in all different ways.

John and Jay, parents of two sons (11 and 10 years old), shared their experience in having these conversations. “Our younger son has asked more questions over the years,” they explained. “We do our best to answer directly, and we know that they will have harder questions to ask as they grow older. A good friend gave us some great advice that I still come back to: ‘Answer the questions they ask, because those are the answers they are prepared to hear.’”

You will know what types of discussions your child can handle as they age. If you have any questions, your adoption agency can help you navigate these conversations and provide you with helpful resources along the way.

Jay added, “I think the biggest challenge will be when they face comments about having two dads. They’ve told us that some kids think it’s weird, and the boys have heard some derogatory words, but so far, they are very matter-of-fact about it. In most ways, the challenges John and I face in raising kids are no different than any other parents.”

“Our boys have grown up knowing that there are **many different types of families**, some with single parents, some with two moms, etc. There have been situations where our family has needed to adjust, but we included the boys in those discussions and decisions. In preschool, our older son decided to take our framed photo of [his birth mother] to the Mother’s Day Breakfast. Our younger son chose to sit at a table with his friend’s mom. When their friends ask why they don’t have a mom, they explain that they do have a mom and she lives in New York, and that they have two dads.”

By normalizing all types of families and family dynamics, you can set your child up for successful and positive conversations with others.

# Conclusion



Adoption is a major life event. If you are considering adoption and are a part of the LGBTQIA+ community, you will want to find an adoption agency that is supportive, reputable, and that can offer you the best services. Adoption is an incredible opportunity, but it is also a lifelong commitment. Before you take the plunge, make sure you have an adoption agency that can be present in your journey, every step of the way.

Adoption has not always been legal for gay and transgendered people. After many years of activism, protesting, and pursuing equal rights, LGBTQ+ finally have the right to marry and grow their families. There is still a long road ahead for equality, as some states allow private adoption agencies to discriminate against gay and lesbian couples looking to adopt. Adoptions With Love, however, fully supports the LGBTQ+ community in their pursuit of adoption.

As adoptive parents Eric and Rob say, “We used to wonder if we could truly love an adopted child as much as one that was genetically ours in some way; however, those fears were completely unfounded. The love we have for our children feels no different than if we were biologically the same.”

We understand that sexuality and gender identity have nothing to do with raising a family. DNA and biology do not define a family. Family is formed with love. Our goal is to find safe, stable, and loving families for children.

If you are interested in adopting and reside in Massachusetts, reach out to Adoptions With Love. Whether you are gay, bisexual, transgendered, questioning, queer, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, androgynous or asexual, we will support you. We want to help you pursue your dreams of adopting a child, and we want to get to know you better as you begin this incredible, life-changing journey. Call Adoptions With Love at 617-964-4357, or [contact us online](#).



*Call (617) 964-4357*

Adoptions With Love is a full-service, licensed, LGTBQ adoption agency in Massachusetts. We are here to help you grow your family.