

Champions for Children

Adoption Options: Part One



There are six basic types of adoption:

1. Older Child Adoption through the State
2. Domestic Infant Adoption
3. Intercountry Adoption
4. Relative/Kinship Adoption
5. Stepparent Adoption
6. Embryo Adoption

OLDER CHILD ADOPTION THROUGH THE STATE

There are approximately 125,000 children available for adoption in the United States. These children are in some type of State system, usually a foster care system. The State terminates the rights of the parents when the children cannot safely be returned home, which then legally makes these children available for adoption.

The majority of these children have been abused or neglected. Many of these children have physical and emotional challenges. There may be sibling groups waiting to be adopted too.

1. What help is available for those who will adopt an older child with challenges?

If the family has come through a State system, there will be histories of the children available, such as school reports, psychological assessments, and a birthfamily medical history.

The adopting family should get as much information as possible to make the best decision about adoption.

The adopting family should also ask the agency what counseling and advocacy are available. This will vary with each agency.

2. Why is it important to keep sibling groups together?

Keeping the children together will reduce the amount of loss that they experience and give them a connection to their past and their biological family.

3. Are there general standards concerning time frames and financial commitments?

Since these children are wards of the State, the State will pay for the majority, if not all, of the costs associated with the adoption. Your agency will be able to give you specific details, as they are different in every situation. Often, children qualify for State-paid financial subsidies. Consult a tax professional to get information concerning the Federal Tax Credit and how it (and a possible state tax credit) relates to your family.

Concerning time frames, many people choose “foster-to-adopt.” In this case, the child begins living with the family as a foster child, and the family chooses to keep the child as part of

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their family. Other times, the speed of the process is dependent upon the timing of the Home Study. Once a family has an approved Home Study, a child can be placed but may have to go through a waiting period before the adoption is finalized.

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

1. Where is the best place to keep up with the latest changes concerning countries?

You should always check with your agency for specific and up-to-date information. While your social worker may not know every detail of every country, there should be a specialist in the agency for the country of interest.

The State Department Website gives good general information, but may not always be up-to-date: <http://www.travel.state.gov>

2. What should individuals consider when first thinking about intercountry adoption?

First, you should answer two questions:

- How will having a multicultural family affect each member of your family?
- Can you celebrate and teach the child his or her heritage?

After answering these questions, you should explore the different countries and their regulations and time frames to see which best fits your family and your community.

3. What are some of the differences and similarities between intercountry adoption and older child adoption through the State?

Similarities:

- The children all need a home.
- They all come through a system and have experienced significant loss, which will affect them, to a certain degree, for the rest of their lives.
- Most of these children are older children and are not entering families as an infant.
- Many of these children have special placement needs (physical and/or emotional).

Differences:

- Older children (foster) are placed within their own country.
- With intercountry adoption, most parents will need to travel to the child's birthcountry. Some families will need to travel twice, depending on the country.
- Requirements for post-placement reports differ depending on the type of adoption.

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4. What are the general steps for intercountry adoption?

1. Prepare your Home Study. (*Your state says you can adopt.*)
2. USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) gives you permission to bring an orphaned child into the U.S. (*The U.S. government says you can bring an orphan into our country for adoption.*)
3. Approval by the sending country. (*The sending country says you can adopt one of their children.*)

Please consult your tax professional to discuss the differences and/or similarities regarding how the Federal Adoption Tax Credit and any state adoption tax credits apply to these two types of adoption.

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