



How Adoption Works at Adoption Center of Illinois

We know that no two situations are exactly alike and that every person has his or her own thoughts, feelings and ideas about adoption. Whether you are pregnant or your child is already born, we are here to listen and to provide you with useful information so that you can decide what is best for you and your child.

1. Getting started...

The first step is to contact an adoption counselor by calling ACI at **1-800-552-1066**. You can also Chat or email with a counselor by going to **www.adoptillinois.org**. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Anything you discuss with us is kept confidential.

2. Talking with a counselor and meeting with us...

Once you contact us, an adoption counselor can arrange to meet with you at a location and time that is convenient for you. Your counselor will review each step in the adoption process so that you know what to expect. She will ask about your specific situation and help you understand your rights and how adoption works in Illinois.

We will respect and support any decisions you make regarding your child's future, whether or not you choose adoption. No one at ACI will ever pressure you to do anything. Only you can decide if adoption is right for you and your child.

3. Mapping out your own adoption plan...

When you are ready, your counselor can help you create your own adoption plan. Adoptions can range from "open" to "closed" and everything in between. Contact with the adoptive family and your child can range from in-person meetings, to the exchange of pictures and letters, or no contact at all.

4. Selecting the adoptive parents for your child...

Under Illinois law you have the right to choose your child's adoptive family. At ACI you can look through albums of waiting adoptive families and if you want, your counselor can arrange for one or more meetings between you and the adoptive parents you choose. It is up to you to decide whether or not you wish to select or meet your child's adoptive family.

5. What happens when your child is born...

Your ACI counselor will be there to help you communicate with the hospital and make sure that the hospital knows exactly what you want to happen while you are there. We believe that your wishes should be respected while you are in the hospital and that you have every right to see and spend time with your child (or not) after he or she is born.

Your baby can go directly from the hospital to the adoptive family you have chosen, or if you feel you need more time, we can provide temporary care for your child with one of our loving temporary care families.

****What if my child is older or already born?***

The start of the process is similar to the one described above. The only difference is that we take into account the child's age, development, and personality. In some situations with older children, prospective adoptive parents and birth parents will meet several times to ensure that birth parents and the child feel safe and that the child fits well into his or her new family. Sometimes in these situations, children will visit with the adoptive family for several hours or overnight to make sure that adoption is right for everyone.

6. Going forward with your adoption plan...

Under Illinois adoption law, birth mothers may not sign final adoption forms until at least 72 hours (3 days) after their child is born. You are not required to sign these forms on the third day, and we encourage you to take as much time as you need before making a final decision about adoption. Once a birth mother signs these forms (Final and Irrevocable Surrenders for Adoption), her adoption decision is permanent and cannot be changed.

7. After your child is placed for adoption...

After final adoption forms are completed and signed, adoptive parents begin the process of legally adopting the child. Through this process, adoptive parents become responsible for the child in every way. Usually, post-adoption communication between birth parents and adoptive parents is discussed prior to a birth mother signing final adoption forms. Following an adoption, communication between birth parents and adoptive parents can range from no communication, to the exchange of pictures and letters, to on-going face-to-face contact.

Our support to birth parents continues after they place a child for adoption. Our counselors are available to meet and talk with birth parents for years to come. After placing a child for adoption, we frequently help birth parents link up with resources in the community.

***NOTE:** *We refer to “placing a child for adoption” instead of “giving up a child for adoption” because we believe that placing a child for adoption is a responsible and caring decision. This term acknowledges that the decision to place a child for adoption is a thoughtful choice*

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