



FAMILY PLANNING GUIDE

Your family adoption decision plan

Give an important family decision a clear next step. Use this guide together, then use the worksheet to separate what you know from what you need to find out.

1

Define the commitment

Write what adoption means to your family and which lasting parental responsibilities you want to take on.

2

Hear your child's voice

Make room for questions about names, relationships, privacy and the proposed legal change.

3

Clarify the legal route

Identify existing orders and the consent, notice or court questions that need attention in your state.

4

Check the practical goal

Identify the care, records or family-planning issue you want to address. Check its actual requirements.

5

Plan time and costs

List the documents and case-specific fees. Court scheduling and requirements shape the filing plan.

6

Choose the next step

Decide which conversation, official instruction, procedural answer or legal advice will help you proceed.

If your child calls you Mom or Dad

That can be a starting point for a conversation. A preferred title does not establish legal consent or tell you everything about your child's feelings. Discuss the proposal without requiring a particular response.

Useful questions

- What do we hope adoption will accomplish?
- What does our child want to understand?
- Which existing orders or consents matter?
- What documents and costs apply to our case?

Who can help?

- **Family:** goals, wishes and practical planning.
- **Court clerk:** filing instructions and procedure.
- **Attorney:** disputed rights and legal advice.
- **Adoption360:** adoption document preparation.

Read the guide and its primary references

[Is stepparent adoption right for our family?](#)

[Children's Bureau: Stepparent Adoption \(2022 general background\)](#)

[American Academy of Pediatrics: Becoming a Stepfamily](#) · [Let's Talk About Adoption](#)

Use current state court instructions for your case. This planning guide does not determine eligibility or replace required consent documents.

Turn your questions into a plan

For each topic, write what you know, your open question, and the next person or official source to consult. You do not need every answer today.

Date: _____ State / court location: _____

01 Commitment

What lasting parental responsibilities are we choosing? What do we hope adoption will accomplish?

02 Child's voice

What does our child want explained? Which details or conversations should remain private?

03 Legal route

Which orders, consents, notice requirements or disputed issues need attention?

04 Practical goal

Which care, school, travel, records or family-planning question are we trying to address?

05 Readiness

What information, documents, time and case-specific costs do we need to confirm?

06 Person or source to consult

Who can help answer our next question? Record an official instruction or relevant contact.

Our next practical step

Action:

Person or source:

When we will revisit this:

Keep completed worksheets private. You can use initials and omit sensitive identifiers. This is a conversation and planning aid, not an eligibility score or a legal consent form.