

BIRTH PARENT HANDBOOK

When faced with an unplanned pregnancy, many women don't consider adoption because they don't know much about it. However, once they become informed about the reality of adoption, they often view it as a wonderful solution to a challenging situation. Therefore, before making a decision, we encourage you to educate yourself about the potential benefits of adoption for both you and your baby. We are here to assist you throughout this process because we genuinely care about you and your child. Rest assured, you have come to the right place!

As a licensed adoption agency, we offer a perfect blend of modern professionalism and resources and down-to-earth local support from compassionate individuals who prioritize your happiness and well-being. Our approach to adoption aims to empower you to make informed choices, providing a solid foundation for your future success. Even after you have completed our program, we will continue to offer unwavering support throughout your lifetime.

It is natural to have concerns about adoption initially, fearing that it may imply "abandonment" of your baby. However, the more you learn about adoption, the clearer it becomes that this is not the case at all. Adoption means the best choice for your child, ensuring they are placed with a loving family and provided with a beautiful life full of opportunities that you may not currently be able to provide. In other words, it means you are a good mother.

The most remarkable aspect of choosing adoption with us is that you retain control. Your baby's adoption plan will be tailored according to your preferences and choices. You have the right to select the family based on detailed information about their background and the type of home they will offer your child. Moreover, you have the freedom to decide the level of contact you wish to maintain with the family, both before and after the birth of the baby. Whether you choose to get to know them well, simply meet them once, or never meet them at all, the decisions are entirely in your hands. And we will be right beside you throughout, providing guidance and support.

We are excited for the opportunity to work with you and support you through the adoption journey!



TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

Adoption 101

ADOPTION LANGUAGE	1
EXPECTANT PARENT	
BIRTH PARENT	
PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENT	
ADOPTIVE PARENT(S)	
PLACE FOR ADOPTION	
ADOPTION PLAN	
MATCH WITH A FAMILY	
OPEN, SEMI-OPEN, & CLOSED ADOPTION	2
OPEN ADOPTION	
SEMI-OPEN ADOPTION	
CLOSED ADOPTION	
ALTERNATIVES AND OPTIONS	3
PARENTING	
ADOPTION	
FOSTER CARE	
ABORTION	
FRIENDS OR FAMILY	

02

Adoption Choices of Texas Information

ABOUT US	4
WHO WE ARE	
OUR LOCATION	
OUR SERVICES	5
YOUR ADOPTION SPECIALIST	6
GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE	7

03

Legal Procedures and Adoption Registries

BIRTH MOTHERS	8
LEGAL COUNSEL	8
BIRTH FATHERS	9
NEXT LEGAL STEPS	9
ADOPTION REGISTRY PROCEDURES	9
PATERNITY REGISTRY	
CENTRAL ADOPTION REGISTRY	

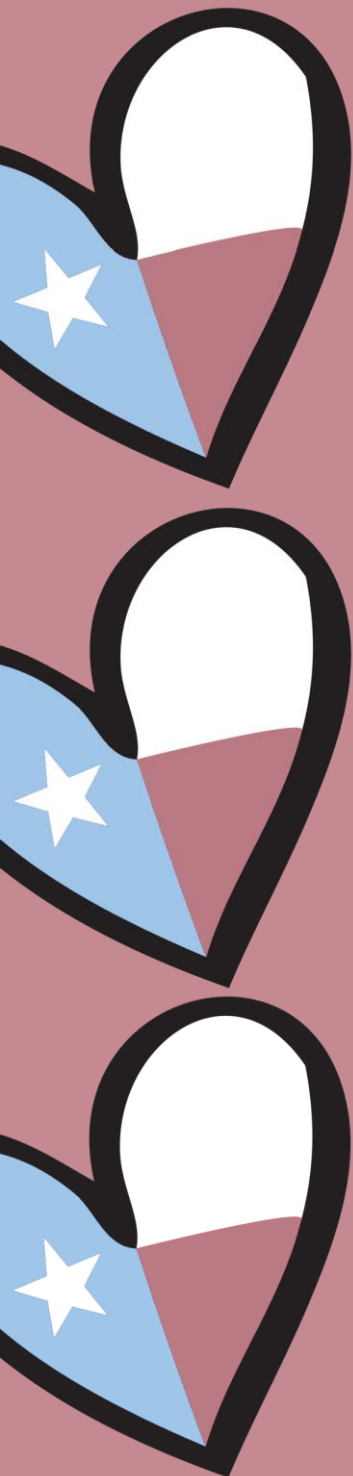
04

Expectant Parent Timeline

EXPECTANT PARENT TIMELINE	10
ADDITIONAL HELPFUL TIPS	11
HANDBOOK RECEIPT OF INFO	12

ADOPTION 101

ADOPTION LANGUAGE



Expectant Parent: Prior to the baby's birth, we use the term "expectant parent". Sometimes there are two expectant parents: an expectant mom and an expectant dad. But in the majority of adoptions, only the expectant mom is involved. Therefore, in most of the material and information we provide here, we will refer to the expectant mom or the birth mom rather than two expectant parents or birth parents.

Birth Parent: A birth parent is a parent who has placed a child for adoption. Before the baby is born, people sometimes use the term "expectant parent" or the term "birth parent" interchangeably. Birth parent, birth mother, and birth father are frequently used terms.

Prospective Adoptive Parent: An individual or family who hopes to adopt, but hasn't finalized the adoption yet.

Adoptive Parent(s): An individual or couple who has finalized the adoption. Sometimes, people use the term "adoptive parent" when talking about a prospective adoptive parent.

Place for Adoption: This is an important term that is used instead of "*give up for adoption*" or "*give up the baby*". When a birth mother places her child for adoption, she has made a conscious decision for her child's future. She hasn't "*given up*."

Adoption Plan: An adoption plan is the plan expectant parents put together (with our help) for their unique and individual adoption. It involves many different elements like picking a family, receiving support and emotional counseling from an Adoption Specialist, creating a birth plan for the hospital, the type of contact they will have with the adoptive family, financial support needed, and more.

Match with a Family: A match occurs when the expectant parents select a family to adopt their child. A match can also occur if the agency is asked to select a family on behalf of the expectant parent(s).

Once you start changing the way you talk about your decision, you will find yourself taking pride in the adoption plan you are creating. Change your language, change your thoughts, change your life!



ADOPTION 101

OPEN, SEMI-OPEN, & CLOSED ADOPTIONS

Adoption Choices of Texas is dedicated to supporting your preferred adoption plan in collaboration with prospective adoptive parents. We prioritize your ability to make an informed decision that aligns with your own feelings and values, and we will assist you in exploring all available options. We strive to connect you with families who share your desired level of openness if you choose an open adoption. It is important to note that every adoption plan is distinct, and no two are identical. Some birth mothers may opt for openness before the placement, but prefer closedness after the placement. While post-adoption contact is not enforceable under Texas law, we, the agency, encourage families to follow their agreed post adoption agreement. To give you an overview, we have provided general guidelines on the various types of adoption options below.

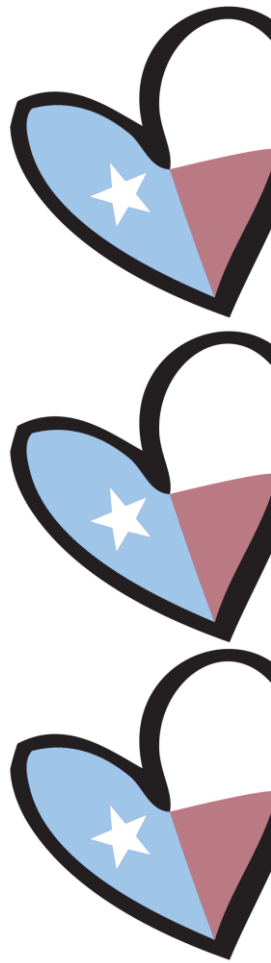
Open Adoption: This is a common choice for many expectant mothers. The adoption is open because the expectant mother will get to know the family and she will have a plan for an ongoing relationship. With an open adoption, the expectant mother or the agency will select the family.

The relationship typically starts before delivery. A meet and greet face-to-face meeting will occur typically within 2 weeks after selecting a family. Depending on how the connection progresses, the expectant mother and the prospective adoptive parents may want to exchange direct contact information, such as phone numbers and email addresses.

After delivery, the birth mom may want to spend time with the adoptive family and the baby at the hospital, depending on how she is feeling. Then, she may want to keep up with the family through direct contact (phone calls, texts), and all might even later visit. In many open adoptions, the visits are annual.

Semi-Open {Semi-Private} Adoption: This is another common option. The expectant mother (or the agency) chooses the family and may decide to meet the family and build a relationship before delivery. After the baby is placed, the contact is mostly through pictures and letters, and there are usually no personal visits or contact.

Closed Adoption: In modern adoption, this is far less common. In many cases the expectant mother will ask the agency to choose a family on her behalf, although that's not the case every time. After the family is chosen, the expectant mom typically won't meet or have a relationship with the family. There are usually no updates, pictures, letters, nor contact between the birth mom and the adoptive family.



ADOPTION 101

ALTERNATIVES & OPTIONS

Parenting: Being a parent is an incredible experience, but it also carries significant responsibilities. It is crucial to consider various factors before embarking on this journey. Are you financially prepared to afford the expenses of raising a child? How will being a parent impact your future aspirations and dreams? Do you have a solid support system comprising friends, family, or a partner who can offer the necessary assistance? These are just a few of the many important questions that we will help you in considering. Our goal is for you to make an informed decision about whether adoption is the right path for you and your baby. If you determine that it is, we are here to guide and support you in taking the next steps.

Foster Care: You have the option of temporarily placing your child under the care of Child Protective Services while you take necessary steps to become capable of parenting the child. This choice allows you the opportunity to secure employment, save up for an apartment, and obtain the financial means to afford necessities like diapers and childcare. However, regaining custody of your child will involve meeting specific state requirements, such as attending parenting classes and demonstrating your ability to provide a safe environment for them.

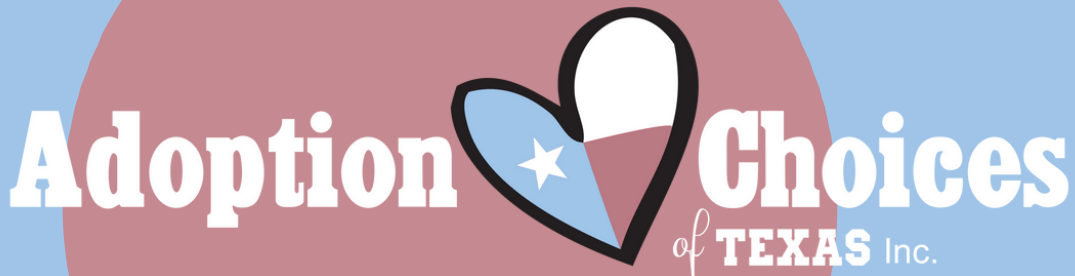
Friends and Family: Whether it be close friends or members of your own family, there might be individuals who are willing to take on the responsibility of parenting your child or providing short-term care until you are able to do so.

Adoption: The adoption journey is undeniably beautiful, yet it also poses emotional challenges. Fortunately, the advancement in adoption practices today offers an array of options. We will assist you in designing your own adoption plan and connect you with families who are aligned with your preferences. This ensures that the family seeking to adopt your baby shares your aspirations. Whether you opt to choose the family or not and/or meet them before delivery or not, the decision is entirely yours. You are in complete control prior to placement, and we will provide unwavering support at every step of this journey, including after placement.

Abortion: Undoubtedly, abortion remains a highly controversial issue in American society, thereby making conversations surrounding it challenging and often uncomfortable. Should you want to explore this subject further or seek comprehensive information, it is recommended to consult with your healthcare provider. Ultimately, the choice of whether to undergo an abortion is an intensely personal decision that solely rests within your hands.

What if I'm not sure? What if I can't decide?

If your pregnancy was unexpected, it's completely normal to initially feel overwhelmed and unsure about your next steps. However, take comfort in the fact that you have the power to regain control and we are here to offer support and empathy. By carefully examining your choices and considering your true emotions, you will find a resolution that brings you peace and tranquility. Trust your instincts and prioritize what aligns with your own aspirations and the future you envision for yourself and your baby.



ABOUT US

WHO WE ARE

Adoption Choices of Texas is licensed by the State of Texas to provide professional, full-service adoption assistance statewide. We understand that everyone faces different circumstance and has different needs.

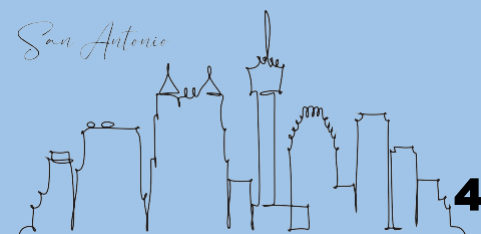
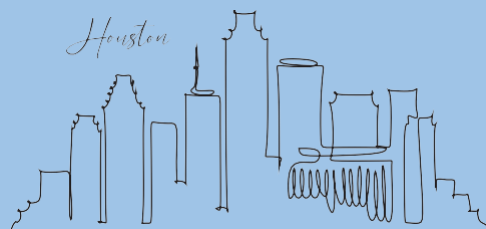
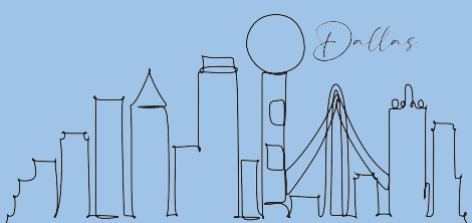
For Expectant Parents: We are here to help you make an adoption plan that meets your needs.

Our Location:

We have compassionate adoption professionals who work across Texas to provide services to the birth parents and adoptive families we serve. Our main office is located at:

Adoption Choices of Texas, Inc.
5005 W. Royal Ln., Suite 291
Irving, TX 75063

Birth Parent Hotline: 945-444-0333
(Call or Text 24/7)



OUR SERVICES



INTAKE SERVICES

Our intake services are with qualified adoption specialists that are compassionate, understanding, and ready to start your choice of your adoption plan.



MEDICAL CARE

Taking care of yourself during pregnancy is the most important thing you can do for the baby. We can help you get medical care for a healthy pregnancy.



CASE MGMT SERVICES

Our Expertise Case Manager will be assigned to you to guide you through all adoption services that we provide. They work hand-in-hand with the Executive Director to provide a wrap around approach.



FINANCIAL STABILITY

We can help meet your needs with approved living expenses during pregnancy.



A SAFE PLACE TO STAY

If you are experiencing unsafe or unstable housing, we can provide a safe and comfortable place for you.



SUPPORT COUNSELING

Our counselors are here to listen and to help. Call us now to start getting support and understanding your choices. We offer counseling both during the pregnancy and after the adoption



LEGAL SERVICES

Our agency will arrange legal services for all your questions answered with an attorney for one-on-one service



BIRTHING SERVICES

One of our amazing services is we will provide an experienced adoption supportive birth doula (not affiliated with the agency) for your birthing needs.



PLACEMENT AND POST PLACEMENT SERVICES

Our Birth Service Professionals are qualified to help with your placement paperwork around a plan around your choices. We follow that up with post-placement support after finalization.

YOUR ADOPTION SPECIALIST

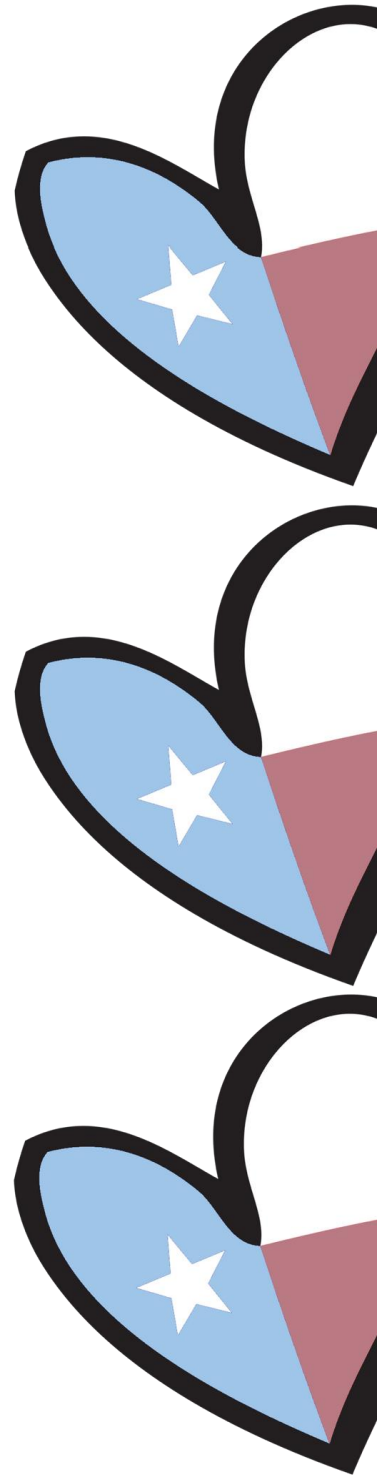
Your **Adoption Specialist** will provide unwavering support throughout your adoption journey. Here are some of the valuable services she will offer:

- Your Adoption Specialist will be available for appointments.
- She will accompany you to your medical appointments, providing both transportation and companionship.
- Assistance will be provided with applications for health insurance, if you do not already have coverage.
- Emotional support will be offered before, during, and after the birth of your baby, as long as you require it.
- If part of your adoption plan involves a relationship with the adoptive family, your Adoption Specialist will facilitate and cultivate this connection.
- Ensuring your safety and stability during pregnancy will be prioritized, and she will also assist with your financial plan.
- Birth parents can contact the birth parent hotline 24/7 via call or text at 945-444-0333.

It is important to note what your **Adoption Specialist** is not:

- Despite her knowledge and expertise in the field of adoption, your Adoption Specialist cannot fulfill every possible need. It is best to communicate your needs in advance to allow time for finding appropriate resources.
- She is not a licensed attorney and cannot provide you with legal advice, but you will be provided an opportunity to speak with an attorney.
- While she can provide transportation to certain appointments, your Adoption Specialist cannot act as a personal chauffeur for all your activities during the time you work together.
- Financial assistance cannot be provided by your Adoption Specialist. Your financial situation will be assessed and approved by the relevant individuals at Adoption Choices of Texas. It is essential to discuss your support plan thoroughly to determine your needs.

We understand the immense stress and emotional toll that this process can have on you. Remember, your **Adoption Specialist** is here to support you. Openly discussing your emotions with her will allow us to guide you through this journey with our wealth of experience.

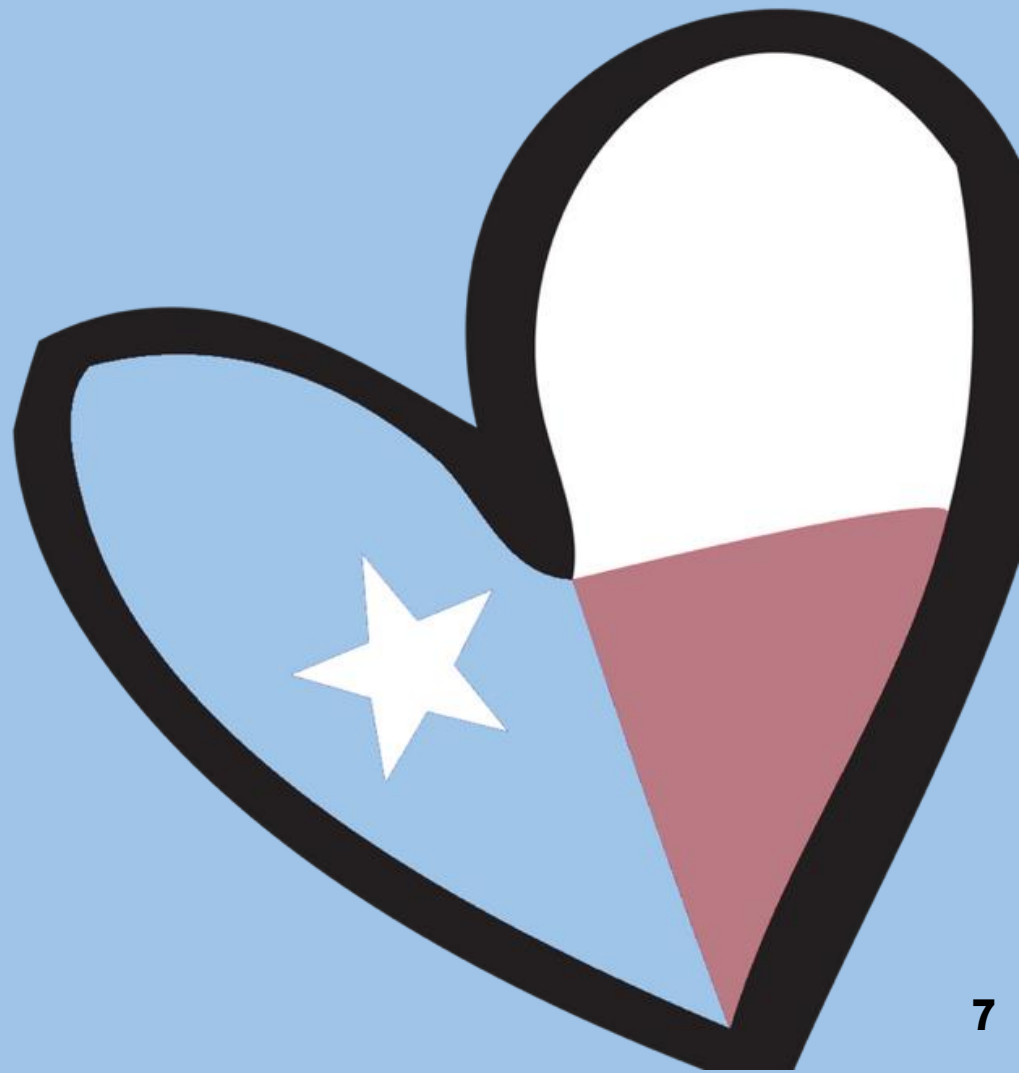


GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

You have the right to file a grievance or appeal a decision at any time. The Agency is committed to treating all clients fairly and with the dignity and respect they deserve.

- To file a grievance or appeal, please submit a written grievance to your Adoption Specialist. They will respond in writing within three business days.
- If the matter remains unresolved, your Adoption Specialist will escalate your grievance to the Agency's Executive Director within one business day. The Executive Director will then provide a written response to you within three business days.
- If the issue persists, the Executive Director will forward the grievance to the Agency's CEO within one business day. The CEO will respond in writing to you within three business days.
- If a resolution cannot be reached, you have the option to take your grievance to the Licensing Representative assigned to Adoption Choices of Texas.

Any alleged violations of licensing requirements can be reported to the Department of Family and Protective Services at 1-800-252-5400.



TEXAS ADOPTION LAWS AND ADOPTION REGISTRIES



BIRTH MOTHER

To proceed with the adoption process, you are required to sign an irrevocable affidavit of relinquishment of parental rights, which allows for the termination of your parental rights. This affidavit can only be signed after the child has reached 48 hours of age. It is crucial that you sign the relinquishment when you are physically and emotionally prepared, free from the influence of any medication. Hence, the minimum 48-hour period from the child's birth to the signing of the affidavit ensures that you have ample time to make this decision.

LEGAL COUNSEL

Adoption Choices provides the opportunity for every birth parent to receive legal counsel. We will connect you with your own attorney prior to signing relinquishment documents, to go over your legal rights and have the paperwork thoroughly explained.

BIRTH FATHERS

(NOT ALL FATHERS ARE THE SAME)

Presumed Father/Parent: Any person (including a same sex or non-binary spouse) married to you at the time of the conception or birth of the child OR divorced from you within 300 days of the birth. Even if they are not the biological father, we must terminate their potential rights so we need them to sign an affidavit of relinquishment just like you. If they are not the biological father and are unwilling to sign an affidavit or relinquishment, we may be able to terminate their potential rights involuntarily, but a signed affidavit of relinquishment is always preferable.

Acknowledged/Adjudicated Father: Any man/person who has either (1) signed an Acknowledgment of Paternity with you before a certified entity or (2) has a court order signed by a judge stating they are the child's biological father. They will need to sign an affidavit of relinquishment just like you or a presumed father.

Alleged Father: This is the legal term for any potential biological father who is not presumed, acknowledged or adjudicated. He can sign an affidavit of waiver of interest before the birth rather than an affidavit of relinquishment after birth (since he is not legally the father absent presumption, acknowledgment, or prior court order). If he does not sign an affidavit of waiver of interest, he has until the 31st day after the birth of the child to file a Notice of Intent to Claim Paternity with the Texas Paternity Registry (maintained by the Vital Statistics Unit of the Texas Department of State Health Services) if he wants to claim paternity.

NEXT LEGAL STEPS

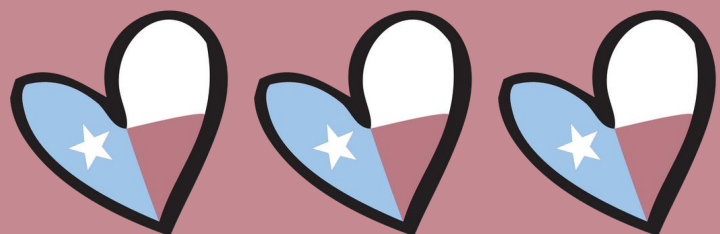
If you choose to sign a relinquishment of parental rights, a termination hearing will be conducted by the Court. Your presence, as well as that of the adoptive parents, is not necessary for this hearing. During this hearing, the Judge will issue a judgment that terminates all rights of any potential parents. Furthermore, even though the child is currently residing with the adoptive parents, the Judge will appoint the Agency as the child's legal conservator, as it is a legal requirement.

Subsequently, after the child has spent six months in the adoptive parents' home, an adoption hearing will take place. Prior to this hearing, all post-placement visits must be finalized, and the Agency must provide consent for the adoption.

ADOPTION-RELATED REGISTRIES

The Texas Department of State Health Services operates a Paternity Registry, which provides a resource for men to investigate about adoption or termination lawsuits pertaining to a potentially biological child. To benefit from this registry, interested individuals must register within 31 days following the child's birth. Failure to do so prior to the child's 32nd day of life may result in the termination of any parental rights without notice to the alleged father.

The Texas Vital Statistics Unit operates the Central Adoption Registry, located in Austin, Texas. This registry allows biological parents and adoptees to register their names. In the event that both parties register and there is a match, the registry will notify them, providing a means of communication if desired.



Expectant Parent Timeline

We are very excited to support you in the next phases of your adoption plan. This is a general timeline of next steps and other useful information.

1

The adoptive parents are notified they were selected.

- Your case manager will connect with the family you selected within 2 days to discuss your match, timelines, and expectations.
- Your case manager will arrange a zoom call within 2 days for you to formally meet the adoptive parents.

2

You will have a face to face lunch with APs.

- An Agency staff person will arrange and attend a lunch meeting with you and the adoptive parents. Please honor the date and time of the meeting.

3

Agency staff will deliver a PEX card.

- Agency staff will deliver you PEX Visa card and PEX rules.
- Verify your case manager has a lease on file and is informed of your needs.

4

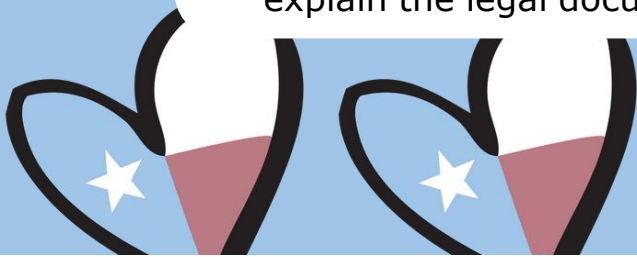
Communication

- Frequent check-ins with your case manager is important & helpful during your adoption journey.
- Open & Semi-open adoption plans will begin communicating with the adoptive parents in your preferred method (via call, text, or video). weekly or bi-weekly

5

Preparation for Delivery

- At the beginning of your 8th month the case manager will begin working on your hospital plan and assign you to a Doula to support you during delivery.
- Your case manager will arrange for you to speak to an attorney to explain the legal documents you will sign at relinquishment.



Additional Helpful Tips

- ◆ **Failure to follow PEX rules can get your card permanently suspended.**
 - Weekly funding amounts for PEX:
 - \$140 for expectant moms with no children.
 - \$180 for expectant moms with children.
 - Housing funding (rent checks) will be delivered on the 3rd of each month.
 - The case manager & adoptive parents are prohibited from giving clients money outside of the agency's assistance.
- ◆ **During your intro call with the adoptive parents, your adoption specialist will be on the phone for support & guidance.**
 - Think of three questions you want to ask adoptive parents.
 - Think of how frequently you want to communicate with the adoptive parents, so it can be scheduled around your convenience. Think about if you want to have calls and/or texts with adoptive parents. Your adoption specialist will inform the family of your preferences.
 - Let your adoption specialist know your preferred method of communication and the frequency you want to communicate. Your adoption specialist will share your communication wishes with the adoptive parents.
 - Notify your adoption specialist about appointments, even if she doesn't take you. It can be a quick text message, so she can request medical records and inform the adoptive parents. Please notify doctor's office that medical records will be requested.
- ◆ **Hospital Planning: Below are some topics you can discuss during your hospital planning with your case manager:**
 - Your preferred support person during delivery.
 - Your wishes for visitation at the hospital involvement of the adoptive parents during the hospitalization, birth certificate, and naming the child
 - Circumcision for a male child.
 - Breastfeeding or bottle feeding.
 - Please make sure you honor the scheduled call with the attorney. **11**

I consent and desire that Adoption Choices of Texas, Inc., a licensed adoption agency, shall have the exclusive right to locate and obtain prospective adoptive parents for the purpose of adopting the above said child. Approved expenses will be given after a match with a family. All receipts must be turned in. These expenses may include attorney fees, social staff, counseling fees, qualified living expenses, medical expenses, and certain other expenses related to my pregnancy. I further understand that I have the right to meet and approve of the adoptive parents, should I so desire.

I further understand the following will be performed by the attorney or adoption agency to help complete the adoption:

- a. Gather information from the adoptive and natural parents to prepare necessary pleadings;
- b. Draft and file the proper pleadings at the proper time in the proper court;
- c. Effect the transfer of physical custody of the child from the natural parents to the adoptive parents;
- d. Monitor the execution of the necessary consents of the natural parents to the adoption, or, in the alternative, seek a determination that the consent of one or both of the natural parents is not necessary;
- e. Arrange the lawful payment of the fees of the adoption;
- f. Assist in the satisfactory completion of the statutory adoption investigation;
- g. Secure the entry of a Final Decree of Adoption, and;
- h. Submit the Certificate of Adoption to the correct agency in the child's birth state for preparation of the new birth certificate.

I further understand that the payment of legal fees concerning the adoption will be paid by the adoptive parent(s).

RECEIPT OF INFORMATION

I have read and reviewed the Expectant Parent Handbook with my Adoption Specialist. I have a copy that I can keep and refer to.

Expectant Parent Signature

Date

Adoption Specialist Signature

Date

