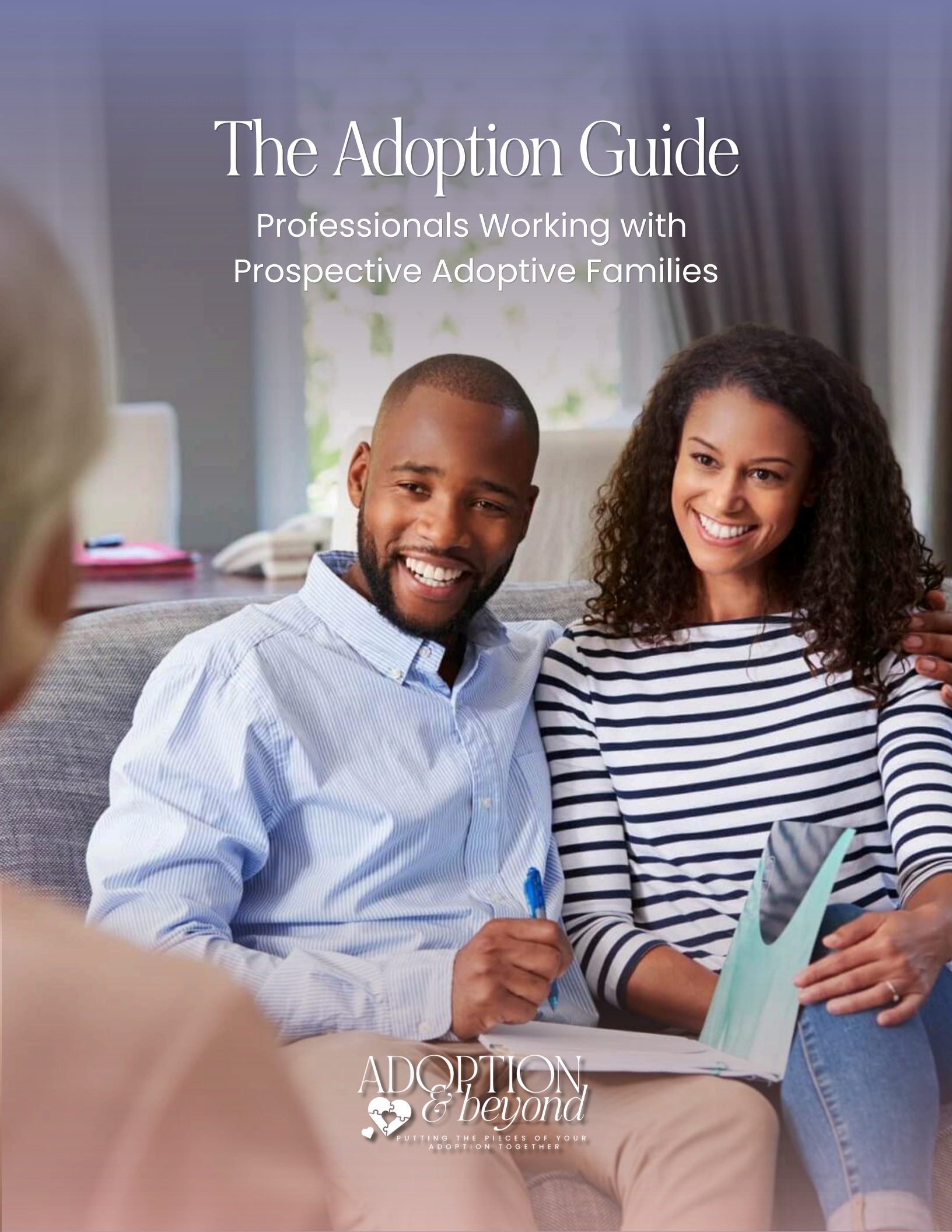
The Adoption Guide

Professionals Working with Prospective Adoptive Families



ADOPTION & beyond

PUTTING THE PIECES OF YOUR ADOPTION TOGETHER

As Service Professionals, we know how hard you work to ensure that the people you work with are healthy, safe, and well-cared for.

At Adoption & Beyond, we apply that same care and hard work to meet the needs of birth parents, adoptive parents, and their children by providing quality adoption services before and after placement.

It is our belief that every participant in adoption experiences the adoption process in their own unique way, and this should be recognized and respected. We are committed to supporting everyone throughout the adoption process no matter the outcome. Keeping them informed is part of that process.

The purpose of this guide is to help educate professionals working with prospective adoptive parents through this emotional experience. For additional assistance, please feel free to reach out to Adoption & Beyond; we are here to support not only you as the professional, but also the adoptive parents, and ultimately the children they will bring into their hearts and home.

Steffany Aye, LSCSW, LCSW
Adoption & Beyond Founder + Director

Section #1:
Deciding if Adoption is the Right Choice

As a professional, you know your clients best when it comes to their well-being, both physically and emotionally. Deciding if adoption is the right choice for them rests on a variety of factors, including their reason for adoption.

It is important to be cautious that families are not grieving a recent miscarriage, infertility diagnosis, or loss of a child when they start the adoption process.

Some questions to ask prospective adoptive families include:

When you think about adopting a child, how do you feel?

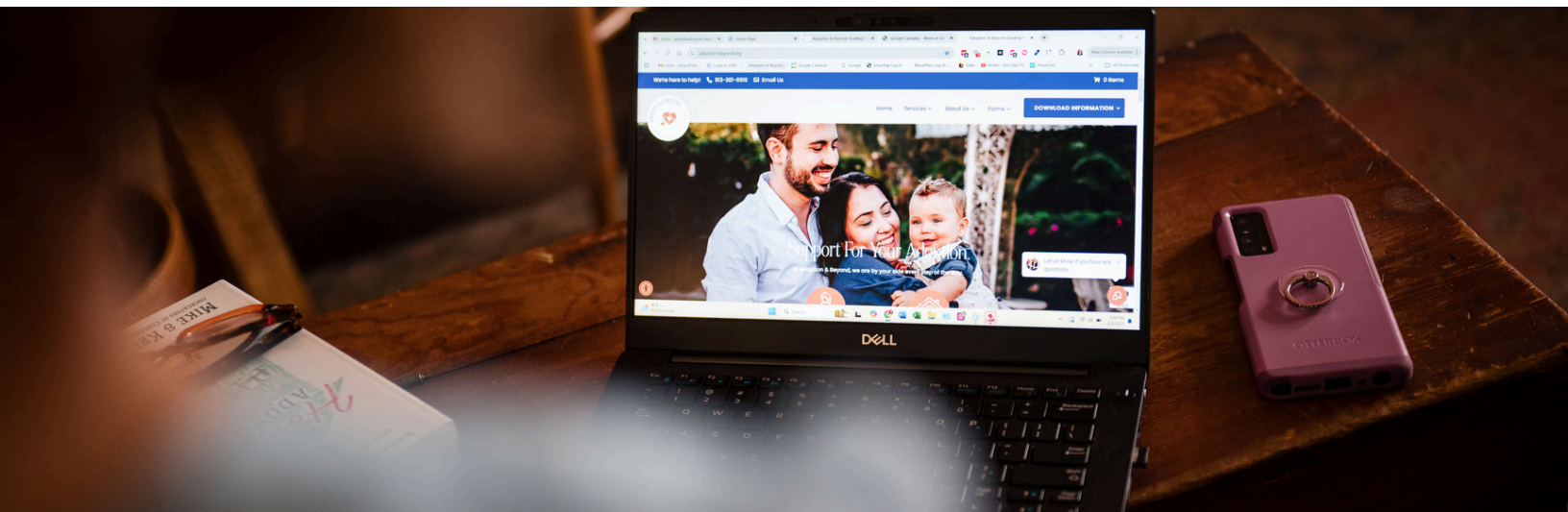
Do you feel you have appropriately grieved the loss of having biological children?

Do you think you could love a child not genetically related to you?

Are you ready for a roller coaster ride and feeling out of control of the adoption process?

When you think about adoption, do you feel hopeful?

The purpose isn't to lead them to one decision or another. The purpose is to help them explore their feelings and motivations as they consider adoption to build their family.



Section #2:
Selecting the Right Pathway of Adoption

There are many pathways hopeful adoptive parents could consider when adopting, including:

Domestic Adoption Through an Agency

An Agency Adoption occurs when Adoption & Beyond, Inc. matches prospective birth parents who are considering an adoption plan for their child with hopeful adoptive parents looking to adopt a child as a way to grow their forever family. The expecting birth parents select a family based on a detailed family profile created by the adopting family. Our program is based on the concept of open adoption in which birth and adoptive families meet, choose each other, and create an ongoing relationship that benefits the child.

Self-Networking Adoption

A Self-Networked Adoption occurs when a family locates expecting birth parents through their own networking. Self-networking efforts can take the form of posting adoption wishes online, paid advertising, or close friends or family spreading the word that a family is looking to adopt. Once a family locates prospective birth parents, Adoption & Beyond, Inc. can assist families with their adoption by providing both the expecting birth parents and the hopeful adoptive parents with adoption services, education, and guidance.

Embryo Adoption

This type of adoption occurs when a genetic family has remaining embryos from previous in vitro fertilization treatments that they wish to place for adoption. Adoptive parents may adopt frozen embryos in hopes that they will be able to carry and give birth to their adopted child.

The number of embryos available depends on how many embryos a particular donating family has available. Hopefully, once the embryos are thawed, at least one will be available for transfer.

Foster Care Adoption

Children in the foster care system have been removed from the home for various reasons such as abuse, neglect, or exposure to alcohol and drugs. The primary focus for these children is reintegration into their birth family's home. However, placing a child back into their original home is not always in the child's best interest.

Local public child welfare agencies can work with families to identify children awaiting homes. Typically, they are older children, sibling groups, or children with specific medical or mental health needs. Hopeful adoptive parents must attend several hours of training through a state foster care agency before qualifying for a Foster Care Adoption.

International Adoption

An International Adoption occurs when a family adopts a child from outside the United States. Adoption & Beyond can guide families in selecting the international placement agency that best matches their family dynamics. We network with a number of international agencies that have programs in many different countries. Adoption & Beyond works closely with a family's selected international placement agency in order to serve as the local liaison to complete the adoptive home study process and to provide post-adoption services and support.

As a professional, having trusted resources for families to explore is a huge help. Adoption & Beyond is a non-profit agency with years of experience finding safe homes for children in Kansas and Missouri.

We strive to be transparent in everything we do, providing birth and adoptive parents with all the information and support they need to have a successful adoption journey.

Section #3:
What to Expect with the Paperwork and Training

At Adoption & Beyond, we honestly believe that information is power, and having all the information about adoption, the process, and life after adoption is important to the successful placement of a child into a forever home. Before adoptive families adopt, there is a series of training requirements to meet, including attending an educational workshop, taking online courses, reading a list of helpful books, and completing an adoptive home study.

Application

Once a family has decided to begin the adoption process, one of the first tasks is to complete an application to start the adoptive home study. Next, a series of time-sensitive supporting documents must be gathered for the home study agency.
These include, but are not limited to:

- [ ] **Birth Certificates**
- [ ] **Marriage Certificate (If applicable)**
- [ ] **Training Certificates**
- [ ] **Medical and Life Insurance Verification**
- [ ] **Tax Forms**
- [ ] **Photos of Home and Family**
- [ ] **Income Verification**
- [ ] **Background Checks**
- [ ] **References**
- [ ] **Medicals**

The paper gathering process can feel overwhelming for an adoptive family. An organized agency like Adoption & Beyond is there to help them navigate the process and ensure that all the correct information is gathered and submitted in a streamlined and timely manner.

Adoptive Home Study

A home study is a written report required by law. In addition, it is an educational tool to prepare hopeful adoptive parents to adopt a child. It is also an assessment process to determine whether families can provide a child with a safe, nurturing, and healthy environment. An approved home study is required to adopt a child.

Adoption & Beyond is available to perform domestic, international, private, and embryo adoptive home study assessments. A home study report is created using both the supporting materials and information from a home visit. A professionally prepared home study is usually 15-20 pages in length.

Once approved, a home study is valid for 12 months. If the adoption process takes more than 12 months, an updated home study would be required to continue.



Section #4:
Adoption Costs

There are many costs associated with adoption, and it is a very common and important question for hopeful adoptive families to have.

Depending on the kind of adoption a family pursues, the cost could range from $0 to $65,000+. As outlined previously, there are different pathways to adoption, so there is one that fits every family's budget.

Cost should never be a barrier to adoption. It is always best to check with a local agency like Adoption & Beyond before citing costs to families considering adoption.

Some of these costs go towards the:

- [ ] **Application**
- [ ] **Home Study**
- [ ] **Matching Process**
- [ ] **Placement and Finalization**

There are many resources available to lessen the financial impact on hopeful adoptive families. Read about **Adoption Financial Assistance** at www.adoption-beyond.org to learn more.



Section #5:
What is Open Adoption?

One way to gain an understanding of open adoption is to explain what it is not. Open adoption is often confused with other types of relationships.

At the top of the list is co-parenting. In co-parenting, the parent figures have equal authority, roles, and access. In open adoption, birth parents do not have the same authority, roles, or access as the adoptive parents.

FIRST

Birth parents have no authority over the adopted child. Birth parent involvement is based on respect and cooperation, not authority.

SECOND

There is little confusion between the role of adoptive mother and the role of birth mother because the roles are very distinct. While the adoptive mother carries out the role called “Mom,” the birth mother is more akin to a special extended family member.

THIRD

There is the matter of access. In open adoption, contact with the birth family is agreed upon and planned ahead of time. A healthy open adoption relationship features mutually respected boundaries that puts the child’s best interest first.

Section #6:
Your Adoption Profile Book

Building an adoption profile can be overwhelming. But it can also be uplifting when approached with the right mindset. An adoption profile book is all the information an expecting birth parent learns about a hopeful adoptive family and the type of home they are growing. It should include information about the family, photos, and a great layout that draws the eye and keeps readers interested.

At Adoption & Beyond, we frequently receive requests for tips on creating the adoption profile book. Here are some of the topics we cover with the families we work with:

An Opening Message to the Expectant Parents

The opening message is an adoptive family's first introduction of themselves to an expecting parent considering an adoption plan. It sets the tone for everything that follows, so our first guidance is always for families to be themselves and let their genuine hearts come through.

The strongest messages feel personal rather than generic. Expecting parents can sense the difference between a warm, sincere greeting written from one person to another and a formal introduction that could have been addressed to anyone. Families connect best when they write as though they are speaking directly to the person reading the profile.

It also helps for families to remember what the expecting parent may be carrying in this moment. A message that acknowledges the love and courage behind considering an adoption plan, and pairs it with an honest glimpse of the home they hope to provide, reassures the reader that this family sees her as a person and leaves the most lasting impression.

Selecting the Perfect Photographs

Photos play a huge role in how a birth family views an adoptive family. A birth family will scan a profile and first take note of the photographs. Choosing photographs that best depict family, lifestyle, and the type of parent they will be is paramount.

As much as families are initially drawn to the concept of the perfect profile photo, which shows them at their best, it helps to have a few candid shots in the mix as well. Having a friend take photos of activities the family loves doing together, such as gardening, hiking, biking, swimming, cooking, and reading, will help birth parents see how their child will fit into the adoptive family's life.

Designing a Layout

There are so many templates, colors, fonts, and graphics floating around the internet and document creation software. When choosing a layout design, families should opt for one that reflects their personal taste and personality but isn't so busy that it distracts from the book's content.

Families should choose two to three colors that work well together and complement each other, along with easy-to-read fonts.

As a family puts together their profile, they should try to tell a story about how they plan to provide their child with a loving home. Use the layout to make the profile easy to navigate. Adoption & Beyond can help create this profile, offering advice and resources to present the best representation of an adoptive family.



Section #7:
Communication Pre-Birth

Before an adoption takes place, prospective birth and adoptive families usually meet; this allows both parties to ask questions and get to know each other.

Some questions hopeful adoptive parents may want to ask expecting birth parents include:

Why are you looking at placing your child for adoption?

What has your pregnancy been like so far?

Can you tell us anything about yourself that we should know as adoptive parents?

When you think of your child in the future what do you see for him or her?

What does an open adoption look like to you?

What role do you hope to play in your child's life going forward?

What background does your family have in terms of religion, culture, language, and education?

Is there anything we should know about your family's medical history?

Honest and respectful communication between birth parents and adoptive parents is an essential ingredient for a healthy, long-term relationship.

Section #8:
The Hospital Experience

The hospital experience for prospective adoptive parents depends on the hospital plan developed by the expecting birth parent during the adoption process. This looks different for every adoption.

What is the hospital plan?

The hospital plan is prepared by the expecting birth parent with the help of the adoption coordinator at the adoption agency.

A hospital plan is a document that provides an outline of what to expect during the hospital stay for parties involved in an adoption process, including but not limited to: attorneys, hospital staff, social workers, and the hopeful adoptive family.

The hospital plan outlines the expecting birth parent's anticipated expectations of the interaction between the prospective adoptive family and themselves at the hospital. For example, who will be involved and in what capacity during labor and delivery, time spent alone or shared with the baby after birth, what documents or mementos the birth parents want to take home, preferences regarding the baby's initial vaccinations, or circumcision of a baby boy, and what hospital discharge may look like.

The prospective birth parent has the right to make changes to a hospital plan at any time. A hospital plan is a beneficial tool that provides expecting birth parents the autonomy to decide how they prefer the hospital experience to transpire ahead of time and the hopeful adoptive family knows what to expect before arriving at the hospital.

For a deeper look at the hospital process, **Adoption & Beyond offers a free online Hospital Adoption Best Practices Training**, with 1.5 of professional Continue Education Units available.

Section #9:
After the Birth

Bringing a New Child Home

Bringing a child home is an amazing moment in the adoptive journey. Being prepared is important. Having a bedroom, clothing, food, car seat, diapers, toys, safety precautions, and other elements in place before the child comes home is crucial.

At Adoption & Beyond, the families we work with are guided through the adoption process. Even after the adoption is finalized, we are here to support and offer advice and support.

Adoption Finalization

Adoption finalization is different for every family. Some states require adoptive parents to appear in court, while others are only required to sign legal documentation. This is an exciting and sometimes stressful time for adoptive families.

It can take varying amounts of time for finalization to occur following adoptive placement. Some families may finalize an adoption after only a few months; others may take up to six months or longer.

An adoption coordinator can answer questions and direct a family to an adoption attorney to assist with finalizing their adoption placement.



Section #10:
Frequently Asked Questions

Adoption is a huge decision and one that sometimes includes a lot of paperwork and many questions. Here are some frequently asked questions from hopeful adoptive families.

How Long Does It Take to Receive a Child?

Domestic Adoptions: While this is a reasonable question, it cannot be answered very clearly. Because the expecting parents select the hopeful adoptive parents with whom they would like to place their child, there is little predictability within the selection process. Some families wait weeks once they enter an adoption program, while others wait a year or more.

International Adoptions: The timeframe for international adoption will be determined primarily by the country a family decides to adopt from. Most international adoptions take approximately 1 to 2 years to complete, though some countries take longer. An international adoption agency should be able to provide specific information for each country's current process.

Embryo Adoptions: The matching process is completed by the genetic family choosing the adopting family with whom they would like to donate their embryos. In general, this process could take as little as a few months.

How Often Do Expecting Birth Parents Change Their Minds?

Domestic Adoptions: There are no guarantees. Expecting birth parents sometimes change their minds prior to placing their baby for adoption. This occurs less often when an open relationship between a prospective birth family and adoptive family has been developed.

International Adoptions: In international adoption, children who are placed for adoption have either been abandoned or the parental rights have been terminated within the country prior to placement with a family.

Embryo Adoptions: In an embryo adoption, embryos are donated to the adopting family prior to a medical transfer procedure. Following the birth of a child through a successful embryo transfer, a formal adoption can occur.

Will There Be Medical or Family Background Information Regarding the Child?

Domestic Adoptions: As much information as possible regarding the expecting birth parents' medical and family histories is gathered and provided to the adoptive family.

International Adoptions: It is difficult to obtain background information for most children because they are typically abandoned, making it virtually impossible to acquire medical and family information. However, there are a few countries where families voluntarily place their child for adoption, and in these cases, good medical and family background information can be obtained and provided to the adopting family.

Embryo Adoptions: A great deal of medical and family information is gathered regarding the genetic family and is provided to the adopting family.

Do You Have Any Advice About the Adoption Process?

Adoption is a life-altering experience and should be approached thoughtfully. Perhaps the most helpful advice we can give is: remain flexible, be patient, prepare for the unexpected, keep an open mind, and stay positive.

If a family is looking for more information about adoption, we can help. Have them contact (**913) 381-6919** to speak to our adoption coordinators at Adoption & Beyond.



Section #11:
Getting Started

When families begin the adoption journey, there are many steps to get started. Sometimes the process can feel overwhelming, and having an adoption coordinator guide them can help. Here are the main steps to starting the journey of adoption.

Although every agency is different, these are the general steps a hopeful adoptive family will walk through.

STEP 1 - SCHEDULE A CONSULTATION

Meeting with an adoption coordinator gives families a clearer understanding of everything involved in the adoption process.

STEP 2 - APPLY FOR SERVICES

After the initial meeting, a family can decide whether to continue with an adoption plan. This includes an adoptive home study process to fully prepare them for the path ahead.

STEP 3 - BEGIN THE PAPERWORK FOR THE HOME STUDY

Once a family receives approval, they can begin the home study paperwork at their own pace. The home study process represents the first major step in this journey for the adoptive family.

Section #12: Resources

Adoption Books & Magazines

Adoptive Families Magazine - An online magazine that covers all aspects of adoption.
https://www.adoptivefamilies.com

Tapestry Books - A full line of adoption books.
https://www.tapestrybooks.com

Adoption Education

NCFA (National Council For Adoption)
They offer an array of interactive e-learning courses designed to deepen each person's understanding of the joys and challenges of adoption.
https://adoptioncouncil.org/courses/

Creating A Family
Creating a Family is the national nonprofit for education and support on infertility, adoption, & foster care.
https://creatingafamily.org/

Adoption Financial Learning and Resources
There are many resources available to lessen the financial impact on adopting families.
https://adoption-beyond.org/adoption-resources/financial-aid/

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