



Understanding Infant Adoption 7

Colorado Adoption Guide for Healthcare Providers & Staff

Prepared by Kelsey Vander Vliet Ranyard and Celeste Liversidge, JD, of Ethical Family Building; [Ethical Family Building](#) is a nonprofit organization working to safeguard domestic adoptions through education, transparency, and accountability.

Disclaimer: This resource guide is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. It is not a substitute for consultation with hospital legal counsel or a licensed adoption attorney. Adoption laws and procedures vary by jurisdiction and are subject to change. Healthcare providers and staff are strongly encouraged to seek professional legal guidance to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Introduction to Adoption

What is Adoption?

Adoption is a legal process in which biological parents (also referred to herein as “placing parents” or “birth parents”) relinquish their parental rights to their child, allowing the child to be placed in the care of adoptive parents. However, adoption is more than just a legal agreement; it is a life-altering experience that reflects a commitment to a child's love, care, and well-being.

Healthcare providers should have a basic understanding of the three main types of adoption to offer informed support for their patients:

- **Private Adoption:** This is a direct arrangement between birth parents and adoptive parents, often through a licensed adoption agency or attorney. In a private adoption, the birth parents have voluntarily relinquished their parental rights to the child, and the child is placed directly into the legal and physical custody of the adoptive parents. Most private adoptions are “open adoptions,” meaning there will be ongoing contact between the birth parents and adoptive parents. Private adoption is the most common type of adoption that healthcare providers encounter when working in mother-baby and neonatal units.
- **Adoption from Foster Care:** This occurs when a child in state foster care is legally available for adoption after a court has terminated the parental rights of the birth parents. Foster care adoptions often involve older children. Every state has laws and regulations governing foster care and adoption, which are

managed by the state's public child welfare agency. If the child is placed for adoption in another state, compliance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) is required.

- **Intercountry Adoption:** The process by which a child born in one country is adopted by a family in another country. The State Department serves as the oversight authority for intercountry adoption in the United States.

For expectant mothers, the adoption journey is filled with complex emotions and culminates in a life-changing decision. The private adoption process allows mothers to create an adoption plan at any point during their pregnancy or after giving birth. In this journey, healthcare providers play a crucial role, providing neutral care and support, facilitating fully informed decision-making, and making ethical referrals to adoption providers. Your role in this process is integral in ensuring the well-being of all patients considering this option.

Important Terminology

The biological parent signs adoption consent or relinquishment, authorizing the court to terminate her parental rights:

- Before adoption consents are signed, refer to the biological parent as an **“expectant parent”** or **“parent.”**
- A parent making an adoption plan for their child is called a **“placing parent.”**
- After adoption consents are signed, refer to the biological parent as a **“birth parent.”**

Support for Patients Considering Adoption

Expectant parents should have access to a variety of support resources from the moment they begin considering adoption through the completion of the process and beyond. Below is a summary of some of the available services and providers that patients can access to find appropriate support.

Pregnancy Options Counseling

Many non-profit organizations in Colorado offer pregnancy options counseling for expectant mothers. The purpose of this counseling is to help women consider their available options during pregnancy. It is important to note that not all pregnancy centers provide the same services. For instance, some pregnancy resource centers do not offer information or referrals for abortion. However, most centers typically provide services such as pregnancy testing, ultrasounds, maternity clothes, parenting assistance, resource referrals, parenting classes, and counseling. Generally, these organizations do not charge fees unless they also operate a licensed medical clinic on site.

Ethical & Effective Referrals

Empowering patients in their decision-making process is key. When making a referral to an adoption provider, it's important to present at least three options. This allows the patient to understand the range of services available and choose the one that best suits her needs. See the Understanding Infant Adoption curriculum handouts [Questions for Healthcare Practitioners to Ask Adoption Agencies and/or Attorneys](#) and [Questions for Patients to Ask Adoption Agencies and/or Attorneys](#) for suggestions.

Choosing an Adoption Provider

The Internet is full of adoption providers offering help to expectant parents, but not all of these entities have your patients' best interests at heart. It's essential to understand the different types of adoption professionals available:

- **Licensed Adoption Agencies:** Adoption agencies are licensed by the state to provide adoption services to expectant/birth parents and adoptive families. These services can include social work, home studies, adoption education, pregnancy counseling, adoption matching, and post-placement care. Agencies work

to ensure that social and emotional challenges are addressed through social work and counseling, while also ensuring compliance with adoption rules and regulations.

- **Licensed Adoption Attorneys:** Attorneys play a vital role in the adoption process. Ideally, the adoptive parents should have their own attorney, and the expectant or birth parents should be represented by a separate attorney. This ensures that everyone's rights are protected and that there are no conflicts of interest. Attorneys in Colorado are licensed by the Colorado State Bar Association.
- **Unlicensed Adoption Intermediaries:** Some adoption providers are not licensed to offer adoption services. Unlicensed adoption intermediaries are also referred to as “advertisers,” “matchmakers,” “brokers,” or “marketers.” They solicit expectant and adoptive parents for their services through online ads and other marketing tactics and collect substantial matching fees from hopeful adoptive parents. Working with an unlicensed adoption provider can complicate the process for expectant mothers trying to find suitable adoptive parents for their children and can prevent them from getting adequate support and guidance. It is very appropriate to ask an agency to see a copy of their state-issued child-placing agency license.

More than half of the states in the U.S. have laws prohibiting the use of unlicensed adoption intermediaries, but such laws are frequently overlooked. In Colorado, only a licensed child-placing agency may place a minor for adoption or engage in the business of placing a minor for adoption. See [Colorado Adoption Laws](#), below, for further information.

- **Out-of-State Adoption Providers:** With the increasing use of the Internet in the adoption process, patients may choose to work with adoption providers located outside of Colorado. It's crucial to ensure these out-of-state providers are licensed to provide adoption services and that they work cooperatively with a Colorado-licensed adoption agency and attorney to ensure that the placing parents receive local support before, during, and after adoption. This not only ensures legal compliance but also the safety and well-being of the patient and the child.

Choosing Prospective Adoptive Parents

The process of selecting adoptive parents requires careful consideration. Expectant parents often have a specific vision of the type of family they wish to find for their child. A Colorado-licensed child-placing agency or attorney can assist expectant parents in identifying potential adoptive families that align with their desired characteristics. Once the expectant parent has reviewed profiles of suitable prospective adoptive parents, she should have the opportunity to meet with them in person whenever possible before making a final decision.

Expectant parents should create a list of questions to ask prospective adoptive parents to ensure they find the right family for their child. However, compiling this list can be overwhelming. See the handout [Questions for Patients to Ask Adoption Agencies and/or Attorneys](#) for suggestions.

Support After Adoption

Birth parents often experience grief and a range of intense emotional and psychological effects after placing a child for adoption. It is important to provide them with mental health support during this time. Support following adoption can take various forms, including individual counseling, group therapy, and support groups.

Colorado Adoption Laws

Adoption is a complex legal process. Violating state laws can jeopardize the safety of all parties involved, as well as the child's permanency. Below are frequently asked questions regarding Colorado's adoption laws.

Does Colorado allow independent (non-agency) adoptions?

No. Colorado does not allow independent (non-agency) adoptions, often referred to as "private" or "independent" adoptions. Colorado is an "agency-only" state. Every party pursuing a private adoption will need to work with a Colorado-licensed adoption agency.

Does Colorado allow unlicensed adoption facilitators?

No. Colorado does not permit unlicensed adoption facilitators. Only licensed child placement agencies may collect fees or anything of value in connection with locating or identifying any child, natural parent, expectant natural parent, or prospective adoptive parent for the purposes of adoption. [Colo. Rev. Stat. § 19-5-213 \(2024\)](#)

Does Colorado require that placing parents have separate legal representation?

The laws in Colorado do not address this issue.

Are adoptive parents allowed to pay an expectant mother's living expenses?

Yes. Adoptive parents are allowed to assist the expectant mother with payment of reasonable pregnancy-related expenses disclosed to the court. [Colo. Rev. Stat. § 19-5-103 \(2025\)](#)

However, all pregnancy-related expenses should be escrowed and paid for by a licensed child placement agency.

When can the placing parents sign the adoption consent or relinquishment?

In an expedited relinquishment case where the child is under the age of one, the placing parent, after receiving relinquishment counseling, may sign the petition for relinquishment any time after the child's delivery but the petition and accompanying documents may not be filed with the Court until at least four days after the birth of the child. [Colo. Rev. Stat. § 19-5-103.5 \(2024\)](#)

Can birth parents who have consented to an adoption change their mind and revoke their consent?

Yes. Until a petition for relinquishment is granted by a Court, which typically occurs within seven business days after filing, it remains revocable. In re A.T.M., 205 P.3d 703 (Colo. App. 2010). Once an order of relinquishment is signed by a judicial officer, it then becomes irrevocable unless the relinquishing parent can establish by clear and convincing evidence that such relinquishment was obtained by fraud or duress. [Colo. Rev. Stat. § 19-5-104\(7\)\(a\) \(2024\)](#)

For information on birth fathers' right to revoke their consent, please see below guidance regarding birth fathers.

Are post-adoption contact agreements legally binding in Colorado?

Yes. [Colo. Rev. Stat. § 19-5-217 \(2024\)](#)

What legal rights do birth fathers have in a Colorado adoption?

In all states, including Colorado, birth fathers' legal rights in adoption depend on various factors, such as their legal relationship with the child's mother and their actions before and after being notified of the adoption proceedings. Birth fathers who wish to understand and enforce their legal rights should consult with a Colorado adoption attorney for guidance.

What to do when you suspect a violation in your hospital?

If you witness violations of Colorado law in your hospital or healthcare clinic, you should immediately file a report. Where you file the report will depend on the type of entity or individual who has committed the offense. If you are witnessing repeated offenses, alert your healthcare administration office.

Type of Entity	Where to Report	Contact Information
Licensed Adoption Agency	Colorado Department of Human Services	Kate Bradley, Adoption and Licensing Supervisor: kate.bradley@state.co.us
Licensed Attorney	The State Bar of Colorado, Office of Attorney Regulation Counsel	https://www.coloradolegalregulation.com/complaints/file_complaintagainstatty/ (877) 888-1370
Unlicensed Adoption Facilitator Unlicensed Adoption Advertising	Colorado Department of Human Services	(303) 866-5700

Child Protection in Colorado

Child Protective Services Referrals

In addition to professionals from a variety of other human services, education, religion and law enforcement fields, Colorado state law designates these clinical care related professionals as mandatory reporters:

- Physicians, surgeons, physicians in training, child health associates, medical examiners, coroners, dentists, osteopaths, optometrists, chiropractors, podiatrists, nurses, hospital personnel, dental therapists or dental hygienists, physical therapists, pharmacists, or registered dieticians
- Emergency medical service providers

[Colo. Rev. Stat. §§ 19-3-304 \(2024\)](#)

Child Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Definitions under Colorado Law

Under Colorado law, child abuse reporting applies to children under the age of 16 years. [Colo. Rev. Stat § 18-6-401 \(2024\)](#)

- **‘Abuse’ or ‘Child Abuse or Neglect’** means an act or omission that threatens the health or welfare of a child in one of the following categories:
 - Skin bruising, bleeding, malnutrition, failure to thrive, burns, fracture of any bone, subdural hematoma, soft tissue swelling, or death, and any of the following applies:
 - The condition or death is not justifiably explained.
 - The history given concerning the condition is at variance with the degree or type of such condition or death.
 - The circumstances indicate that the condition may not be the result of an accidental occurrence.
 - A controlled substance is manufactured in the presence of a child, on the premises where a child is found, or where a child resides.
 - A child is born affected by alcohol or substance exposure, except when taken as prescribed or recommended and monitored by a licensed health-care provider, and the newborn child's health or welfare is threatened by substance use.
 - A child is subjected to human trafficking of a minor for involuntary servitude, as described in [§ 18-3-503](#), or for sexual servitude, as described in [§ 18-3-504](#).

- **Child Abuse or Neglect** includes any case in which a child is in need of services because the child's parent has failed to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision that a prudent parent would take. [Colo. Rev. Stat. §§ 19-1-103 and 19-3-102 \(2024\)](#)

Colorado Contact Information

If you suspect child abuse or neglect, call the state's hotline, which serves as a direct, immediate, and efficient route to the counties, which are responsible for accepting and responding to child abuse and neglect inquiries and reports. All hotline calls will be routed to the county where a child resides.

- **Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline:** 844-CO-4-Kids

Safe Haven/Safe Surrender Laws and Process

Safe Haven/Safe Surrender laws are designed to prevent the abandonment and endangerment of infants by providing a safe and legal way for parents to relinquish unharmed newborns. These laws allow parents to safely surrender their infant directly to a designated provider, while generally protecting them from criminal liability and prosecution. Additionally, these laws ensure that the relinquishing parent can remain anonymous. It is important to note that Safe Haven/Safe Surrender laws are intended for use in extreme circumstances and are not a substitute for the resources provided in the public child welfare system or private adoption processes.

- **For Immediate Assistance:** Call or text the 24/7 Safe Haven Crisis Helpline at 1-888-510-BABY (2229)

What are the age restrictions for a Safe Haven/Safe Surrender relinquishment in Colorado?

The infant must be 72 hours old or younger. [Colo. Rev. Stat. § 19-3-304.5 \(2024\)](#)

Who can relinquish the infant under Safe Haven/Safe Surrender laws?

The child may be voluntarily relinquished by his or her parent. [Colo. Rev. Stat. § 19-3-304.5 \(2024\)](#)

Who are the designated Safe Haven/Safe Surrender providers?

A child may be delivered to either of the following:

- A firefighter when the firefighter is at a fire station
- A hospital staff member who engages in the admission, care, or treatment of patients when the staff member is at a hospital or community clinic emergency center.

[Colo. Rev. Stat. § 19-3-304.5 \(2024\)](#)

Putative Father Registry

A putative father is a person who claims to be the father of a child and wants to establish paternity. The purpose of a registry is to allow an unmarried father of a born or unborn child to register his name so he will be notified before the child is placed for adoption. The father does not have to be listed on the birth certificate to register.

Colorado does not have a state registry. Those seeking to establish parentage may learn more about options and procedures at <https://childsupport.state.co.us/parentage>.

Colorado Adoption Service Providers

Licensed Private Adoption Agencies

In Colorado, adoption agencies are licensed by the state Department of Human Services. The following licensed agencies focus on domestic infant adoption with counseling and/or services available for expectant parents. A full listing of child placing agencies licensed in Colorado is available online at <https://co4kids.org/county-search/>. Some agencies are licensed in multiple states.

Contact ascc@adoptioncouncil.org with any additions, corrections, or updates.

- **Adoption & Surrogacy Choices of Colorado**
2801 Youngfield St Ste 320
Golden, CO 80401-2264
Phone: (303) 670-4673
Contact Form: <https://www.adoptionchoices.org/contact-us/>
<https://www.adoptionchoices.org/>
- **Adoption Dreams Come True**
316 W Mulberry St.
Fort Collins, Colorado 80521
Phone: (970) 493-2557
Contact Form: <https://www.adoptiondreams.org/contact/>
<https://www.adoptiondreams.org/>
- **Adoption Options**
1355 S Colorado Blvd Ste 501
Denver, CO 80222
Phone: (303) 695-1601
Contact Form: <https://www.adoption-options.com/im-pregnant.html#contact>
<https://www.adoption-options.com/>
- **Ariel Clinical Services**
2938 North Ave Ste G
Grand Junction, CO 81504
Phone: (970) 245-1616
Fax: (970) 241-8722
<https://arielcpa.org/child-and-family-services/adoption/>
- **Colorado Christian Services**
3959 E Arapahoe Rd Ste 200
Centennial, CO 80122
Phone: (303) 761-7236
ccs@ChristianServices.org
<https://christianservices.org/>
- **Hope's Promise**
1585 S Perry St Ste E
Castle Rock, CO 80104
Phone: (303) 660-0277
info@hopespromise.com
<https://www.hopespromise.com/>

- **Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains**
1035 Osage St Ste 700
Denver, CO 80204
Phone: (303) 922-3433
Contact Form: <https://www.lfsrm.org/locations>
<https://www.lfsrm.org/>
- **Nightlight Christian Adoptions & Foster Services**
1511 E 11th St #240
Loveland, CO 80537
Phone: (970) 663-6799
Fax: (970) 663-9051
<https://nightlight.org/>

Licensed Adoption Attorneys

This listing reflects the current Colorado licensed fellows of the [Academy of Adoption & Assisted Reproduction Attorneys](#). This list may not be representative of all attorneys in the state working in the field of adoption law. Some attorneys hold licensure in more than one state.

Contact ascc@adoptioncouncil.org with any additions, corrections, or updates.

- **Melissa Cianci**
3000 Lava Ridge Ct Ste 115
Roseville, CA 95661
Phone: (916) 797-1575
Fax: (916) 797-1399
Contact Form: <https://www.ciancilaw.com/contact-us/>
<https://www.ciancilaw.com/contact-us/>
- **Timothy J. Eirich**
12596 W Bayaud Ave Ste 390
Lakewood, CO 80228
Phone: (303) 679-8266
Contact Form: <https://www.grobeirich.com/attorney/timothy-j-eirich/>
<https://www.grobeirich.com/>
- **Virginia "Ginny" L. Frank**
1434 Spruce St #100
Boulder, CO 80302
Phone: (303) 756-4673
Contact Form: <https://virginiafrank.com/contact-us/>
<https://virginiafrank.com/>
- **Sarah E. Wilson**
PO Box 377
Ankeny, IA 50021
Phone: (515) 954-8029
Fax: (515) 493-0607
sarah@sarahwilsonlaw.com
<https://sarahwilsonlaw.com/>

Resources

- [Academy of Adoption & Assisted Reproduction Attorneys](#)
- [AdoptChange](#)
- [Child Welfare Information Gateway: State, Territory, and Tribal Resources](#)
- [Colorado Department of Human Services: Child and Family Services](#)
- [Colorado Legislature: Laws](#)
- [Colorado Office of Attorney Regulation Counsel](#)

About the Adoption-Sensitive Clinical Care Project

It is critical that expectant parents who may wish to place a child for adoption have access to appropriately trained staff and comprehensive supports throughout the adoption process. The federally-funded Adoption-Sensitive Clinical Care Project and the Understanding Infant Adoption curriculum are being administered by [National Council For Adoption \(NCFA\)](#), [The Adoption & Foster Care Clinic](#), [Spaulding for Children](#), and [University of Washington School of Social Work](#) for the project period 2024-2026.

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