



Understanding Infant Adoption 7

Connecticut Adoption Guide for Healthcare Providers & Staff

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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 Connecticut 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 Connecticut are licensed by the Connecticut 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 request that an agency provide a copy of its 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. See [Connecticut 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 Connecticut. It's crucial to ensure these out-of-state providers are licensed to provide adoption services and that they work cooperatively with a Connecticut-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 Connecticut-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.

Connecticut 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 Connecticut's adoption laws.

Does Connecticut allow independent (non-agency) adoptions?

Yes. Connecticut does allow independent (non-agency) adoptions, often referred to as "private" or "independent" adoptions. In these cases, the adoption is arranged directly between the birth parents and the adoptive parents, typically with the assistance of an attorney rather than a licensed adoption agency.

Does Connecticut allow unlicensed adoption facilitators?

The laws in Connecticut do not address this issue.

Does Connecticut require that placing parents have separate legal representation?

The laws in Connecticut do not address this issue.

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

Yes. Adoptive parents may contribute up to \$1,500 towards the expectant mother's living expenses. In unusual circumstances, a court may approve a larger sum. In addition to the payment of living expenses, prospective adoptive parents may pay the expectant mother's reasonable telephone and maternity clothing expenses. [Conn. Gen. Stat. § 45a-728c](#)

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

Consent may not be executed until 48 hours after the birth of the child. If the placing mother is a minor, a guardian ad litem shall be appointed by the court to ensure that the parent's consent is informed and voluntary. [Conn. Gen. Stat. § 45a-715\(d\) \(2024\)](#)

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

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

Yes. A court may set aside an order for the termination of parental rights at any time until a final decree of adoption has been issued at the finalization hearing which is usually held within 30 days of the filing of the petition. [Conn. Gen. Stat. § 45a-719 \(2024\)](#)

Are post-adoption contact agreements legally binding in Connecticut?

Yes. [Conn. Gen. Stat. § 45a-715 \(2024\)](#)

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

In all states, including Connecticut, 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 Connecticut adoption attorney for guidance.

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

If you witness violations of Connecticut 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	Connecticut Department of Children and Families	Ted Sanford: theodore.sanford@ct.gov or (860) 550-6300

Type of Entity	Where to Report	Contact Information
Licensed Attorney	Statewide Grievance Committee	https://www.jud.ct.gov/sgc/for_public.htm (860) 296-3848 statewide.grievance@jud.ct.gov
Unlicensed Adoption Facilitator Unlicensed Adoption Advertising	Office of the Attorney General	https://www.dir.ct.gov/ag/complaint/

Child Protection in Connecticut

Child Protective Services Referrals

The following persons are required to report:

- Physicians, surgeons, residents, interns, nurses, medical examiners, dentists, dental hygienists, optometrists, chiropractors, podiatrists, physician assistants, pharmacists, or physical therapists
- Emergency medical services providers

[Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 17a-101 and 53a-65](#)

Child Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Definitions under Connecticut Law

In Connecticut, a child is defined as anyone under the age of 18 for the purposes of child abuse and neglect laws. Additionally, children under the age of 21 who are in DCF (Department of Children and Families) care are also considered children in the context of mandated reporting of abuse and neglect. [Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 17a-93, §17a-103a; §17a-101, et. seq., as amended by P.A. 11-93; §46b-120.](#)

- **Child Abuse:** The term 'abused' means that any of the following applies to a child:
 - Has been inflicted with physical injury or injuries by other than accidental means
 - Has injuries that are inconsistent with the history given of them
 - Is in a condition that is the result of maltreatment that includes, but is not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation or exploitation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment, or cruel punishment

[Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-120](#)

- **Neglect:** A child may be found 'neglected' who, for reasons other than being impoverished, has experienced any of the following:
 - Has been abandoned
 - Is being denied proper physical, educational, emotional, or moral care and attention
 - Is being permitted to live under conditions, circumstances, or associations injurious to the well-being of the child
 - Has been abused
 - A child may be found 'uncared for' who is homeless; whose home cannot provide the specialized care that the physical, emotional, or mental condition of the child requires; or who has been identified as a victim of trafficking, as defined in [§ 46a-170.](#)

Connecticut Contact Information

If you suspect child abuse or neglect, contact the Connecticut Department of Child and Family Services:

- **Connecticut Child Abuse and Neglect Careline:** (800) 842-2288
- **Non-Emergent:** File a CPS report from the Mandated Reporter Portal, <https://portal.dcf.ct.gov/Portal/CPSOR#home>
- **Birthing Hospital CAPTA Notifications and/or Newborn CPS Reports Portal:** <https://portal.dcf.ct.gov/NewbornNotification#capta>

This portal was created for the purposes of giving birthing hospitals the ability to file online reports (DCF- 136) of abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families OR to create a CAPTA Notification for those newborns identified as substance-exposed and consistent with the criteria associated with a notification.

Note that *this website is only for referrals involving newborn children and hospital staff*. Any other child protective services referral should be made by calling the DCF CARELINE. During the online submission process, you will be asked specific questions that will help guide your filing to the most appropriate pathway.

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 Connecticut?

A child who is 30 days old or younger may be relinquished. [Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-58](#)

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

The child may be relinquished by his or her parent or a lawful agent of the parent. [Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-58](#)

Who are the designated Safe Haven/Safe Surrender providers?

Each hospital operating an emergency room shall designate all members of the emergency room nursing staff as employees authorized to take physical custody of an infant pursuant to [§ 17a-58](#). There shall be a designated employee on duty at each hospital emergency room during regular business hours. There shall be a designated place inside such hospital emergency room where physical custody may be taken. [Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-57](#)

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.

Connecticut does not have a state registry. Those seeking to establish parentage may learn more about options and procedures at <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Vital-Records/Parentage>.

Connecticut Adoption Service Providers

Licensed Private Adoption Agencies

In Connecticut, adoption agencies are licensed by the state Department of Child and Family 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 Connecticut is available online at https://licensefacilities.dcf.ct.gov/listing_CPA.asp. Some agencies are licensed in multiple states.

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

- **A Better World Adoptions**
68 S Main St Ste 201
West Hartford, CT 06107
Phone: (860) 677-0470
abwadoption@gmail.com
<https://www.abwadoption.org/>
- **Adoptions From The Heart**
1 Regency Dr #108
Bloomfield, CT 06002
Phone: (860) 657-2626
danielleg@afth.org
<https://afth.org/>
- **Alliance for Children**
2433 Main St Office 2A
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
Phone: (203) 539-0147
<https://www.allforchildrenadoption.org/>
- **Catholic Charities of Fairfield County Inc.**
238 Jewett Ave
Bridgeport, CT 06606
Phone: (203) 416-1336
Fax: (203) 372-5045
adoption@ccfc-ct.org
<https://www.ccfairfield.org/project/family-directions/>
- **Family & Children's Agency**
9 Mott Ave 4th Fl
Norwalk, CT 06850
Phone: (203) 855-8765
Contact Form: <https://www.familyandchildrensagency.org/contact-us/>
<https://www.familyandchildrensagency.org/>

- **Forever Families Through Adoption**

62 Bowman Ave

Rye Brook, NY 10573-2804

Phone: (914) 939-1180

Fax: (914) 939-1181

adopt@foreverfamielsthroughadoption.org

<https://foreverfamielsthroughadoption.org/>

Licensed Adoption Attorneys

This listing reflects the current Connecticut 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.

- **Donald Sherer**

970 Summer St

Stamford, CT 06905

Phone: (203) 327-2084

Resources

- [Academy of Adoption & Assisted Reproduction Attorneys](#)
- [AdoptChange](#)
- [Child Welfare Information Gateway: State, Territory, and Tribal Resources](#)
- [Connecticut Department of Children and Families](#)
- [General Statutes of Connecticut](#)
- [Statewide Grievance Committee](#)

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.

The project is supported by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the United States (U.S.) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award (award #90CO1147-01-00) totaling \$1,000,000 with 100 percent funded by ACF/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACF/HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit the ACF website, [Administrative and National Policy Requirements](#). This information is in the public domain.

