



Understanding Infant Adoption 7

Georgia 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 Georgia 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 Georgia are licensed by the Georgia 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 Georgia, only a licensed child-placing agency may place a minor for adoption or engage in the business of placing a minor for adoption. See [Georgia 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 Georgia. It's crucial to ensure these out-of-state providers are licensed to provide adoption services and that they work cooperatively with a Georgia-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 Georgia-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.

Georgia 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 Georgia's adoption laws.

Does Georgia allow independent (non-agency) adoptions?

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

Does Georgia allow unlicensed adoption facilitators?

The laws in Georgia do not address this issue; however, Georgia law prohibits unlicensed adoption facilitators from advertising in Georgia. [Ga. Code Ann. § 19-8-24\(b\) \(2024\)](#)

Does Georgia require that placing parents have separate legal representation?

The laws in Georgia do not address this issue.

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

Yes. Adoptive parents may make disbursements for expectant mother expenses, including living expenses, medical expenses, counseling expenses, and other expenses connected with adoption services, placement, or birth of the child, provided such disbursements are made through a licensed child-placing agency or through the trust account of a member of the State Bar of Georgia. [Ga. Code Ann. § 19-8-13\(c-d\) \(2024\)](#)

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

Surrender of parental rights may be given only after the birth of the child, and Georgia law specifies the forms required to be used depending on the type of adoption, and the surrender shall be signed under oath and in the presence of both a notary public and an adult witness. [Ga. Code Ann. §§ 19-8-4\(c\), 19-8-5\(c\), 19-8-6\(c\), and 19-8-7\(c\) \(2024\)](#)

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

Can a birth mother who has consented to an adoption change her mind and revoke her consent?

Yes, a birth mother may revoke her surrender within four days of execution. [Ga. Code Ann. §§ 19-8-4\(c\), 19-8-5\(c\), 19-8-6\(c\), and 19-8-7\(c\) \(2024\)](#)

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

Are post-adoption contact agreements legally binding in Georgia?

Yes. [Ga. Code Ann. § 19-8-27 \(2024\)](#)

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

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

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

If you witness violations of Georgia 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	Georgia Department of Human Services Office of the Inspector General	inspectorgeneralhotline@dhs.ga.gov OIG Hotline: (844) 694-2347 https://dhs.georgia.gov/fraud-waste-and-abuse
Licensed Attorney	Georgia State Bar Office of the General Counsel	https://www.gabar.org/general-counsel/file-a-grievance

Child Protection in Georgia

In the state of Georgia, mandated reporters include:

- Physicians, physician assistants, residents, interns, hospital and medical personnel, podiatrists, dentists, nurses, or nurse's aides
- Psychologists, counselors, social workers, or marriage and family therapists
- Reproductive health-care facility or pregnancy resource center personnel and volunteers

[Ga. Code Ann. §§ 19-7-5\(c\), 16-12-100 \(2024\)](#)

Child Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Definitions under Georgia Law

Under Georgia law, a child is any person under the age of 18. [Ga. Code Ann. §§ 19-7-5\(b\)\(4\), 16-12-100\(a\)\(1\) \(2024\)](#)

- **Child abuse** means any of the following:
 - Physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent, guardian, legal custodian, or other person responsible for the care of the child by other than accidental means
 - Neglect of a child by a parent, guardian, legal custodian, or other person responsible for the care of the child
 - Emotional abuse of a child
 - Sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child
 - Prenatal abuse of a child by a parent
 - An act or failure to act that presents an imminent risk of serious harm to the child's physical, mental, or emotional health
 - Trafficking a child for labor servitude.

[Ga. Code Ann. §§ 19-7-5\(b\)\(5\) \(2024\)](#)

- **Neglect** means any of the following:
 - The failure to provide proper parental care or control, subsistence, education as required by law, or other care or control necessary for a child's physical, mental, or emotional health or morals
 - The failure to provide a child with adequate supervision necessary for the child's well-being

- The abandonment of a child by their parent, guardian, or legal custodian.

[Ga. Code Ann. §§ 19-7-5\(b\)\(11\) \(2024\)](#)

Georgia Division of Family and Children Services Contact Information

Contact the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services to report incidents of abuse, neglect, or exploitation: <https://dfcs.georgia.gov/services/child-abuse-neglect> or (855) 422-4453.

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 Georgia?

A newborn child who is no more than 30 may be relinquished. [Ga. Code Ann. § 19-10A-4 \(2024\)](#)

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

The mother of the child may relinquish the child. [Ga. Code Ann. § 19-10A-4 \(2024\)](#)

Who are the designated Safe Haven/Safe Surrender providers?

The child's mother may leave her newborn child in the physical custody of an employee, agent, or member of the staff of a medical facility, fire station, or police station who is on duty, whether there in a paid or volunteer position. [Ga. Code Ann. §§ 19-10A-2, 19-10A-4 \(2024\)](#)

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.

In Georgia, the Putative Father Registry (PFR) is a statewide listing that contains information about males who may be the biological father of a child. Georgia's PFR lists the name, address, and social security number of males who have either:

- 1) Acknowledged that they are the father of a child in a signed writing called an Acknowledgement of Paternity, or
- 2) Registered themselves with the putative father registry to indicate the possibility that they may be the father of a child.

[Ga. Code Ann. § 19-11-9-d \(2024\)](#)

Contact **Georgia Putative Father Registry Vital Records:**

- 2600 Skyland Dr NE, Atlanta, GA 30319

- Phone: (404) 679-4780
- <http://www.health.state.ga.us/programs/vitalrecords>

Those seeking to establish parentage may learn more about options and procedures online at <https://dph.georgia.gov/ways-request-vital-record/putative-father-registry>.

Georgia Adoption Service Providers

Licensed Private Adoption Agencies

In Georgia, adoption agencies are licensed by the Office of Residential Childcare, within the State Department of Human Services. The following licensed agencies focus on domestic infant adoption with counseling and/or services available for expectant parents; an online listing of licensed agencies is available at <https://rcctrails.dhs.ga.gov/Public/PublicFacilitiesSearch.aspx>. Some agencies are licensed in multiple states.

* Denotes a for-profit agency.

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

- **Abiding Love Adoption Agency**
1700 Frederica Rd Ste 304
Saint Simons Island, GA 31522
Phone: (866) 939-4159
Text: (800) 277-0748
info@abidingloveadopt.com
<https://abidingloveadopt.com/georgia-adoption/>
- **ACF Adoptions**
100 N Patterson St #103
Valdosta, GA 31601
Phone: (800) 348-0467
info@adoptionflorida.org
<https://acfadoptions.com/>
- **A Adoption Advocates of Georgia**
1665 Tomahawk Trl
Cumming, GA 30041
Phone: (770) 778-2751
Fax: (770) 783-1000
adoptionadvocatesofga@yahoo.com
<https://www.adoptionadvocatesofga.org/>
- **Adored Adoption Agency**
5665 Atlanta Hwy Ste 102B-377
Alpharetta, GA 30004
Phone: (888) 956-1112
hello@adored.life
<https://adored.life>

- **American Adoptions**
1000 Parkwood Cir E Ste 900
Atlanta, GA 30339
Phone: (800) 236-7846
<https://www.americanadoptions.com/>
- **AmericanKidz Adoption Services***
106 W Lamar St
Americus, GA 31709
Phone: (229) 928-3011
Fax: (229) 924-9003
calcuttadopt@att.net
<http://www.americkidzadoption.com/>
- **Covenant Care Adoptions**
3950 Ridge Ave
Macon, GA 31210
Phone: (478) 475-4990
Contact Form: <https://www.covenantcareadoptions.com/contact-us/>
<https://www.covenantcareadoptions.com/>
- **Georgia Adoption Specialists**
3128 Esplanade Cir SW
Atlanta, GA 30311
Phone: (404) 932-2271
info@georgiaadoptionspecialists.com
<https://georgiaadoptionspecialists.com/>
- **Georgia Agape**
3094 Mercer University Dr Ste 200
Atlanta, GA 30341
Phone: (770) 452-9995
Fax: (770) 457-3623
Admin@GeorgiaAgape.org
<https://www.georgiaagape.org/>
- **Home Adoption Studies, Inc.**
2665 High Point Ct
Loganville, GA 30052
Phone: (404) 447-0414
Fax: (678) 840-7885
homeadoptionstudies@gmail.com
<https://www.homeadoptionstudies.com/>
- **Lifeline Children's Services**
200 Missionary Ridge Ste 200
Birmingham, AL 35242
Phone: (205) 967-0811
georgia@lifelinechild.org
<https://lifelinechild.org/states/georgia/>

- **Nightlight Christian Adoptions**
2350 Prince Ave Ste 16
Athens, GA 30606
Phone: (706) 750-9119
Fax: (706) 309-7100
info@nightlight.org
<https://nightlight.org/georgia-adoption-agency/>
- **An Open Door Adoption Agency, Inc.**
218 E Jackson St
Thomasville, GA 31792
Phone: (888) 338-7720
Text: (470) 431-4556
info@opendooradoption.org
<https://www.opendooradoption.org/>
- **Professional Adoption & Family Services**
Phone: (678) 825-4226
handrews@professionaladoption.org
<https://www.professionaladoption.org/>
- **St. Nick's Kids**
4343 Shallowford Rd NE Ste 711
Marietta, GA 30062
Phone: (770) 559-0887
info@snkinc.org
<https://snkinc.org/>

Licensed Adoption Attorneys

This listing reflects the current Georgia 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.

- **Lila Newberry Bradley**
5256 Peachtree Rd Ste 195
Atlanta, GA 30341
Phone: (404) 442-6969
lila@gababylaw.com
<http://www.gababylaw.com/>
- **Rhonda Fishbein**
6075 Barfield Rd Ste 216
Atlanta, GA 30328
Phone: (770) 437-8582
rlfishbein@bellsouth.net
<https://www.rfishbeinadoption-law.com/>

- **Amy Wallas Fox**
4009 Corning Pl Ste E2-112
Charlotte, NC 28216
Phone: (704) 702-0300
Amy@southernsurrogacy.com
<http://www.gababylaw.com/>
- **Lynn Holland Goldman**
5256 Peachtree Rd Ste 195
Atlanta, GA 30341
Phone: (404) 442-6969
lynn@gababylaw.com
<http://www.gababylaw.com/>
- **Jessica Gordon**
2718 Twin Leaf Trl
Marietta, GA 30062
Phone: (678) 304-8595
jessica@gordon.legal
<https://www.gordon.legal/>
- **Sherriann Hicks**
368 S Perry St
Lawrenceville, GA 30046
Phone: (404) 786-7365
Contact Form: <https://www.jeffhickslaw.com/contact/>
<https://thehickslawgroup.com/>
- **Michael Jennings**
130 Jordan Dr
Chattanooga, TN 37421-673
Phone: (423) 892-2006
mjennings@sampleslaw.com
<https://samplesjennings.com/>
- **Josie Redwine**
3605 Sandy Plains Rd Ste 240-104
Marietta, GA 30066
Phone: (770) 579-6070
www.redwineadoption.com
- **Judy Sartain**
291 SE Alexander St
Marietta, GA 30060
Phone: (678) 578-5185
Contact Form: <https://stearns-law.com/contact/>
<https://stearns-law.com/>

- **Lori Surmay**
PO Box 98403
Atlanta, GA 30359
Phone: (678) 883-8893
lori@atlbabylaw.com
<http://www.atlbabylaw.com/>

Resources

- [Academy of Adoption & Assisted Reproduction Attorneys](#)
- [AdoptChange](#)
- [Child Welfare Information Gateway: State, Territory, and Tribal Resources](#)
- [Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services](#)
- [Georgia Code - Georgia General Assembly](#)
- [State Bar of Georgia](#)

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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