



Understanding Infant Adoption 7

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

Indiana 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 Indiana adoption laws.

Does Indiana allow independent (non-agency) adoptions?

Yes. Indiana 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 Indiana allow unlicensed adoption facilitators?

No. Indiana does not permit unlicensed adoption facilitators. Only Indiana-licensed child placement agencies and Indiana-licensed attorneys may provide adoption services. [Ind. Code § 35-46-1-22\(c-e\) \(2025\)](#)

Does Indiana require that placing parents have separate legal representation?

The laws in Indiana do not address this issue.

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

Yes. Adoptive parents may pay for reasonable costs for the birth mother's housing, utilities, phone service, maternity clothing, travel expenses, and lost wages during the second or third trimester of pregnancy and not more than six weeks after birth. Living expense payments may not exceed \$4,000. [Ind. Code Ann. § 35-46-1-9 \(2025\)](#)

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

Placing parents are allowed to sign adoption consents at any time after the child's birth. [Ind. Code Ann. §31-19-9-2 \(2025\)](#)

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

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

Consent to adoption may be revoked within 15 days of its signing, but only if the court determines that revocation is in the child's best interest; however, if consent was given in front of a judge, it cannot be revoked. [Ind. Code Ann. § 31-19-10-3 \(2025\)](#)

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 Indiana?

No, unless the child is over the age of two at the time of placement. [Ind. Code Ann. § 31-19-16-9 \(2025\)](#)

What legal rights do birth fathers have in an Indiana adoption?

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

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

If you witness violations of Indiana 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	Indiana Department of Child Services	Report to your county DCS office: https://www.in.gov/dcs/contact-us/local-dcs-offices/
Licensed Attorney	Office of Judicial & Attorney Regulation	https://www.in.gov/courts/ojar/di-process/complaint/
Unlicensed Adoption Facilitator Unlicensed Adoption Advertising	Indiana Attorney General's Office, Consumer Protection Division	https://inoag.my.salesforce-sites.com/ConsumerComplaintForm?licensing=true

Child Protection in Indiana

In the state of Indiana, mandated reporters are any person who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of abuse or neglect must report. [*Ind. Code Ann. § 31-33-5-1 \(2025\)*](#)

Child Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Definitions under Indiana Law

Under Indiana law, a child is any person under the age of 18. [*Ind. Code Ann. § 29-3-1-10 \(2025\)*](#)

- **Child Abuse:** The child's physical or mental health is seriously endangered due to injury by the act or omission of the child's parent, guardian, or custodian. [*Ind. Code Ann. § 31-34-1-2 \(2025\)*](#)
- **Neglect:**
 - The child is born with fetal alcohol syndrome; neonatal abstinence syndrome; or any amount, including a trace amount, of a controlled substance or a legend drug in the child's body.
 - The child has an injury, abnormal physical or psychological development, symptoms of neonatal intoxication or withdrawal, or is at a substantial risk of a life-threatening condition that arises or is substantially aggravated because the child's mother used alcohol, a controlled substance, or a legend drug during pregnancy.
 - The child's physical or mental condition is seriously impaired or seriously endangered because of the inability, refusal, or neglect of the child's parent, guardian, or custodian to supply the child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, or supervision, and either of the following applies:
 - The parent, guardian, or custodian is financially able to do so.
 - The parent, guardian, or custodian have failed, refused, or is unable to seek financial or other reasonable means to do so.

[*Ind. Code Ann. §§ 31-34-1-1, 31-34-1-9; 31-34-1-10; 31-34-1-11 \(2025\)*](#)

Indiana Department of Children and Family Services Contact Information

Contact the Indiana Department of Children and Family Services to report incidents of abuse, neglect, or exploitation: (800) 800-5556; if all lines are down, call (833) 800-5556.

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)

More information is available at <https://dcfs.Indiana.gov/safe-kids/prevention/com-communications-sumlicen-abinfant.html>.

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

The relinquished child may not be more than 60 days old. [*Ind. Code Ann. § 31-34-2.5-1 \(2025\)*](#)

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

The child may be relinquished by his or her parent. [*Ind. Code Ann. § 31-34-2.5-1 \(2025\)*](#)

Who are the designated Safe Haven/Safe Surrender providers?

The child may be voluntarily left with an emergency medical services provider; in a newborn safety device at a hospital, fire department or emergency services station; or with medical staff after delivery in a hospital or other medical facility. [*Ind. Code Ann. § 31-34-2.5-1 \(2025\)*](#)

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.

The Indiana Putative Father Registry is maintained by the Indiana State Department of Health Vital Records Office. The form to register is available here: <https://www.in.gov/health/vital-records/files/Putative-Father-Search-Request,-State-Form-54808.pdf>.

More information about establishing paternity is available at <https://www.in.gov/dcs/child-support/about-us/paternity>.

Indiana Adoption Service Providers

Licensed Private Adoption Agencies

In Indiana, adoption agencies are licensed by the Department of Child 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://www.in.gov/dcs/adoption/adoption-agencies>. Some agencies are licensed in multiple states.

* Denotes a for-profit agency.

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

- **A Bond of Life Adoptions**
260 S First St Ste 3
Zionsville, IN 46077
Phone: (317) 873-3841
Fax: (317) 873-4926
info@abladoptions.com
<http://www.abladoptions.com/>

- **Adoption Assistance, Inc.**
2867 Charlestown Rd
New Albany, IN 47150
Phone: (812) 670-5548
adoption@adoptionassistance.com
<https://www.adoptionassistance.com/>
- **Adoption Center for Family Building (ACFB)**
8645 Connecticut St
Merrillville, IN 46410
Phone: (219) 795-9900
info@centerforfamily.com
<https://www.centerforfamily.com/>
- **Adoptions and Family Support Network**
1834 45th Ave
Munster, IN 46321
Phone: (219) 924-2600
Email: adoptionandfamily@att.net
<https://adoptionandfamily.weebly.com/>
- **Adoptions of Indiana**
1980 E 116th St Ste 325
Carmel, IN 46032
Phone: (317) 820-2290
Fax: (317) 574-8971
info@adoptionsofindiana.org
<https://adoptionsofindiana.org/>
- **Bethany Christian Services of Central Indiana**
7168 Graham Rd
Indianapolis, IN 46250
Phone: (317) 578-5000
bcsindianapolis@bethany.org
<https://www.bethany.org>
- **The Cradle**
8105 Georgia St
Merrillville, IN 46410
Phone: (847) 475-5800
Fax: (847) 475-5871
cradle@cradle.org
<https://cradle.org/>
- **Courageous Hearts Adoptions, Inc.**
435 E Main St Ste 145
Greenwood, IN 46143
Phone: (317) 964-3365
Fax: (317) 743-8769
info@chadoptions.org
<https://chadoptions.org/>

- Gateway Woods Family Services**
 14505 Klopfenstein Rd
 Leo, IN 46765
 Phone: (260) 376-1723
info@adoptiongateway.org
<https://www.adoptiongateway.org>
- Gifts of Grace Adoption Support Center**
 656 N 36th St
 Lafayette, IN 47905
 Phone: (765) 807-5117
 Fax: (765) 250-9113
info@giftsofgraceadoption.com
<https://www.giftsofgraceadoption.com/>
- GLAD, Inc. (Greater Love Adoption Decision)**
 5000 N First Ave
 Evansville IN 47724
 Phone: (812) 424-4523
 Fax: (812) 424-3180
julie@gladadoption.com
<https://gladadoption.com/>
- Heartland Adoption Agency***
 1451 W Arlington Rd
 Bloomington, IN 47404
 Phone: (812) 355-5437
 Fax: (812) 334-2171
office@heartlandadoptions.com
<https://www.heartlandadoptions.com/>
- Holy Family Catholic Adoption Agency**
 South Bend Office
 920 Wilber St
 South Bend, IN 46628
 Phone: (574) 307-3585
holyfamilyadoption@protonmail.com
<https://holyfamilyadoption.org/>
- KidsFirst Adoption Services, LLC**
 9135 N Meridian St Ste B-4
 Indianapolis, IN 46260
 Phone: (317) 843-2300
info@kidsfirstadoption.com
<https://kidsfirstadoption.com/>
- Lifeline Children's Services**
 200 Missionary Ridge Ste 200
 Birmingham, AL 35242
 Phone: (205) 967-0811

indiana@lifelinechild.org

<https://lifelinechild.org/>

- **Miriam Project Adoption Services**
1400 Broadway St
Anderson, IN 46012
Phone: (765) 640-1580
Fax: (765) 642-9466
blemay@miriamproject.org
<http://www.miriamproject.org/>
- **Nightlight Christian Adoptions**
6409 S East St
Indianapolis, IN 46227
Phone: (317) 875-0058
Fax: (317) 602-6301
info@nightlight.org
<https://nightlight.org/>
- **St. Elizabeth Coleman Pregnancy and Adoption Services**
3388 Founders Rd Ste 200
Indianapolis, IN 46268
Phone: (317) 787-3412
hummel@SECindy.org
<http://www.givingbirthtohope.org/>
- **St. Elizabeth Adoption Bridges of Kentuckiana Program**
702 E Market St
New Albany, IN 47150
Phone: (502) 468-4290
Fax: (812) 941-7008
info@stecharities.org
<http://adoptionbridges.org/>
- **Tapestry Family Services**
7399 N Shadeland
Indianapolis, IN 46250
Phone: (317) 529-7322
info@tapestry-adoption.com
<http://www.tapestry-adoption.com/>
- **The Villages of Indiana, Inc.**
2405 N Smith Pike
Bloomington, IN 47404
Phone: (812) 549-2992
Contact Form: <https://villagesadoption.org/contact-us/>
<https://villagesadoption.org/>

Licensed Adoption Attorneys

This listing reflects the current Indiana 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.

- **Allyson R. Breeden**
One Main St Ste 201
Evansville, IN 47708
Phone: (812) 759-3853
Fax: (812) 421-4936
allyson.breeden@skofirm.com
<https://www.skofirm.com/>
- **Rebecca S. Bruce**
108 N Liberty St Ste A
Muncie, IN 47305
Phone: (765) 876-3392
Fax: (765) 286-5711
rebecca@bruceandbruce.law
<http://www.adoptindiana.org/>
- **Michelle Berry Domer**
1451 W Arlington Rd
Bloomington, IN 47404
Phone: (812) 336-8300
Fax: (812) 334-2171
Contact Form: <https://berrydomerlaw.com/contact-us/>
<https://berrydomerlaw.com/>
- **Joel D. Kirsh**
2930 E 96th St
Indianapolis, IN 46240
Phone: (317) 575-5555
Fax: (317) 575-5631
Contact Form: <https://indianaadoption.com/contact-us/>
<http://www.indianaadoption.com/>
- **Robert B. Kirsh**
2930 E 96th St
Indianapolis, IN 46240
Phone: (317) 575-5555
Fax: (317) 575-5631
Contact Form: <https://indianaadoption.com/contact-us/>
<http://www.indianaadoption.com/>

- **Steven M. Kirsh**
2930 E 96th St
Indianapolis, IN 46240
Phone: (317) 575-5555
Fax: (317) 575-5631
Contact Form: <https://indianaadoption.com/contact-us/>
<http://www.indianaadoption.com/>
- **Nathan A. Leach**
3815 River Crossing Pkwy Ste 100
Indianapolis, IN 46240
Phone: (317) 566-2174
Fax: (317) 296-7156
nate@indianaadoptionlawyer.com
<http://www.indianaadoptionlawyer.com/>
- **Keith M. Wallace**
915 Main St Ste 203
Evansville, IN 47708
(812) 483-9072
keith@keithwallacelaw.com
<http://www.keithwallacelaw.com/>

Resources

- [Academy of Adoption & Assisted Reproduction Attorneys](#)
- [AdoptChange](#)
- [Child Welfare Information Gateway: State, Territory, and Tribal Resources](#)
- [Indiana Department of Child Services](#)
- [Indiana State Bar Association](#)
- [Indiana State Legislature - Code Search](#)

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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