



Understanding Infant Adoption 7

Louisiana 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 where 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 Louisiana 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 Louisiana are licensed by the Louisiana 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. Louisiana does not permit unlicensed adoption facilitators. In Louisiana,  only the Department of Children and Family Services, licensed child placement agencies, or licensed attorneys may collect fees or disburse expenses in connection with an adoption. See [Louisiana 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 Louisiana. It's crucial to ensure these out-of-state providers are licensed to provide adoption services and that they work cooperatively with a Louisiana-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 Louisiana-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.

Louisiana 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 Louisiana's adoption laws.

Does Louisiana allow independent (non-agency) adoptions?

Yes. Louisiana 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 Louisiana allow unlicensed adoption facilitators?

No. Louisiana does not permit unlicensed adoption facilitators. Only the Department of Children and Family Services, licensed child placement agencies, or licensed attorneys may collect fees or disburse expenses in connection with an adoption. [Rev. La. Child. Code Ann. art. 1223 \(2024\)](#)

Violation of this law is punishable by a fine not to exceed \$50,000 or imprisonment not more than ten years. [Rev. La. Stat. Ann. § 14:186\(C\) \(2024\)](#)

Does Louisiana require that placing parents have separate legal representation?

Yes. In all surrenders for private adoption, the placing parent must have independent legal representation by a Louisiana-licensed attorney. [Rev. La. Stat. Ann CHC § 1121](#)

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

Yes, adoptive parents may pay for the birth mother's medical expenses, counseling expenses, legal expenses, travel expenses, living expenses from a reasonable time before giving birth until forty-five days postpartum, and other expenses as the court finds reasonable. [La. Child. Code Ann. art. 1223 \(2024\)](#)

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

Placing parents are allowed to sign adoption consents three days after birth for an adoption handled by a licensed adoption agency, and five days after birth for an independent adoption handled by an attorney. [LA Child. Code art. 1122 \(2024\)](#)

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?

No. Consent is irrevocable upon signature. [La. Chil. Code art. 1122 \(2024\)](#)

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 Louisiana?

Yes. [La. Child. Code Ann. art. 1269.3 \(2024\)](#)

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

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

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

If you witness violations of Louisiana 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	Department of Children and Family Services	LAHelpU.dcf@la.gov (888) 524-3578
Licensed Attorney	Louisiana State Bar Association	https://www.lsba.org/Public/Complaints.aspx

Type of Entity	Where to Report	Contact Information
Unlicensed Adoption Facilitator	Attorney General's Office Consumer Protection Section <i>(violations of the law are considered to be an unfair trade practice)</i>	(225) 326-6400

Child Protection in Louisiana

Child Protective Services Referrals

Among mandatory reports are all health practitioners, including physicians, surgeons, physical therapists, dentists, residents, interns, hospital staff, outpatient abortion facility staff members, podiatrists, chiropractors, nurses, nursing aides, dental hygienists, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, optometrists, medical examiners, or coroners. [LA Child. Code art. 603\(17\) \(2024\)](#)

Child Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Definitions under Louisiana Law

Under Louisiana law, a child is any person under the age of 18. [LA Child. Code art. 603\(6\) \(2024\)](#)

- **Crime Against the Child** includes the commission of or the attempted commission of any of the following crimes against the child as provided by federal or state statutes: (a) Homicide, (b) Battery, (c) Assault, (d) Rape, (e) Sexual battery, (f) Kidnapping, (g) Criminal neglect, (h) Criminal abandonment, (j) Carnal knowledge of a juvenile, (k) Indecent behavior with juveniles, (l) Pornography involving juveniles, (m) Molestation of a juvenile, (n) Crime against nature, (o) Cruelty to juveniles, (p) Contributing to the delinquency or dependency of children, (q) Sale of minor children, (r) Human trafficking, or (s) Trafficking of children for sexual purposes. [LA Child. Code art. 603\(12\) \(2024\)](#)
- **Neglect** means the refusal or unreasonable failure of a parent or caregiver to supply the child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, care, treatment, or counseling for any injury, illness, or condition of the child, and as a result the child's physical, mental, or emotional health and safety is substantially threatened or impaired. Neglect includes prenatal neglect. [LA Child. Code art. 603\(18\) \(2024\)](#)
- **Prenatal Neglect** means exposure to chronic or severe use of alcohol, the unlawful use of any controlled dangerous substance, or the use of a controlled dangerous substance in a manner not lawfully prescribed that results in symptoms of withdrawal in the newborn or the presence of a controlled substance or a metabolic thereof in the child's body, blood, urine, or meconium that is not the result of medical treatment or observable and harmful effects in the child's physical appearance or functioning. [LA Child. Code art. 603\(24\) \(2024\)](#)

Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services Contact Information

Contact the Louisiana Protection Report Center to report incidents of abuse, neglect, or exploitation:

- **Phone:** 1-855-4LA-KIDS (1-855-452-5437)
- **Online Portal (non-emergency):** https://mr.dcfsls.la.gov/c/MR_PortalApp.app

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 Louisiana?

The term 'infant' means a child not previously subjected to abuse or neglect, who is not more than 60 days old as determined within a reasonable degree of medical certainty by an examining physician. [LA Child. Code art. 1150\(4\) \(2024\)](#)

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

The terms 'relinquish' or 'relinquishment' of an infant mean to give possession or control of the infant by a parent to another in compliance with this chapter with the settled intent to forego all parental responsibilities.

If a parent wishes to relinquish his or her infant, he or she may leave the infant in the care of any employee of a designated emergency care facility or in a newborn safety device that meets the specifications of this law and is physically located inside of a facility that is licensed as a hospital and has an emergency department that is staffed 24 hours per day. If the parent is unable to travel to such a facility, he or she may call 911, and a law enforcement officer or emergency medical service provider shall immediately be dispatched to meet the parent and transport the child to a hospital. [LA Child. Code art. 1150, art. 1151 \(2024\)](#)

Who are the designated Safe Haven/Safe Surrender providers?

The infant may be delivered to a designated emergency care facility ([LA Child. Code art. 1150, art. 1151 \(2024\)](#)), including any of the following: a licensed hospital; a local or parish public health unit; medical clinics during normal hours of operation, including health clinics, ambulatory surgical centers, and federally qualified health center; a manned police station; a manned fire station; or an accredited child advocacy center.

To locate the nearest safe haven location, visit <https://dcfs.louisiana.gov/safehaven/directory>.

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 Louisiana Vital Records Registry maintains the Louisiana Putative Father Registry: <https://ldh.la.gov/page/646>.

Louisiana Adoption Service Providers

Licensed Private Adoption Agencies

The Department of Children and Family Services is responsible for licensing child placing agencies. The following licensed agencies focus on domestic infant adoption with counseling and/or services available for expectant parents. Some agencies are licensed in multiple states.

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

- **A Bond of Life Adoptions, Inc.**
247 W Causeway Approach
Mandeville, LA 70448
Phone: (504) 315-1990

Contact Form: <https://abladoptions.com/contact-us>
<https://abladoptions.com/>

- **Acorn Adoption**
1 Sanctuary Blvd Ste 301
Mandeville, MS 70471
Phone: (985) 626-3800
rdholladay@juno.com
<https://www.acornadoptionsla.com/>
- **Beacon House Adoption Services**
3975 O'Neal Ln Ste C
Baton Rouge, LA 70816
Phone: (225) 753-5551
linda@beaconhouseadoption.com
<https://beaconhouseadoption.com/>
- **Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans**
PO Box 58009
New Orleans, LA 70158-8009
Phone: (504) 523-3755
Contact Form: <https://www.ccano.org/contact-us/>
<https://www.ccano.org/>
- **Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Baton Rouge**
1900 S Acadian Thruway
Baton Rouge, LA 70808
[225-336-8708](tel:225-336-8708)
adopt@ccdiobr.org
<https://www.adoptccdiobr.org/>
- **DeColores Adoptions**
2615 Paul White Rd
Lake Charles, LA 70611
Phone: (337) 540-7265
decoladopt@aol.com
<https://decoloresadoptions.com/>
- **Lifeline Children's Services**
Phone: (205) 967-0811
louisiana@lifelinechild.org
<https://lifelinechild.org/>
- **Open Arms Adoption Services, Inc.**
7330 Fern Ave Ste 204
Shreveport, LA 71105
Phone: (318) 798-7664
angelawhite@openarmsadoptions.com
<https://openarmsadoptions.com/>
- **St. Elizabeth Foundation**
8054 Summa Ave Ste A

Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70809
Phone: (225) 769-8888
info@stelizabethfoundation.org
<https://stelizabethfoundation.org/>

Licensed Adoption Attorneys

This listing reflects the current Louisiana fellows of the [Academy of Adoption & Assisted Reproduction Attorneys](#) and 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.

- **Steven R. Baker**
401 Edwards St Ste 2010
Shreveport, LA 71101
Phone: (318) 588-8000
Fax: (318) 588-8099
- **Suzanne Ecuyer Bayle**
1515 Poydras St Ste 1000
New Orleans, LA 70112
Phone: (504) 524-3781
Fax: (504) 561-0228
Contact Form: <https://mlbw-law.com/contact/>
<https://mlbw-law.com/>
- **Melissa Berniard**
3231 N I-10 Service Rd W
Metairie, LA 70002
Phone: (504) 517-3750
melissaberniard@louisianaadoptionlaw.com
<https://www.louisianaadoptionlaw.com/>
- **Terri Hoover-Odom**
500 N 7th St
PO Box 1576
West Monroe, LA 71294
Phone: (318) 387-8811
Fax: (318) 323-1122
terriodom@odomsaska.com
<https://www.odomsaska.com/>
- **Bernadette R. Lee**
1515 Poydras St Ste 1000
New Orleans, LA 70112
Phone: (504) 524-3781
Fax: (504) 561-0228
Contact Form: <https://mlbw-law.com/contact/>
<https://mlbw-law.com/>
- **Emily Saska**
1055 Laurel St

Baton Rouge, LA 70802
Phone: (225) 448-5883
Fax: (225) 778-7383
emilysaska@odomsaska.com
<https://www.odomsaska.com/>

- **Sheila H. Willis**
1515 Poydras St Ste 1000
New Orleans, LA 70112
Phone: (504) 524-3781
Fax: (504) 561-0228
Contact Form: <https://mlbw-law.com/contact/>
<http://www.mlbw-law.com/>

Resources

- [Academy of Adoption & Assisted Reproduction Attorneys](#)
- [AdoptChange](#)
- [Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services](#)
- [Louisiana Legislature: Revised Statutes](#)
- [Louisiana State Bar Association](#)
- [Child Welfare Information Gateway: State, Territory, and Tribal Resources](#)

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.

