



Understanding Infant Adoption 7

Michigan 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 Michigan 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 Michigan are licensed by the Michigan 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. Michigan does not permit unlicensed adoption facilitators. Only licensed child placement agencies and licensed attorneys may place a child for adoption. See [Michigan 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 Michigan. It's crucial to ensure these out-of-state providers are licensed to provide adoption services and that they work cooperatively with a Michigan-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 Michigan-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.

Michigan 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 Michigan's adoption laws.

Does Michigan allow independent (non-agency) adoptions?

Yes. Michigan 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 Michigan allow unlicensed adoption facilitators?

No. Michigan does not permit unlicensed adoption facilitators. Only licensed child placement agencies and licensed attorneys may place a child for adoption. Anyone who violates this law is guilty of a misdemeanor. [MCL § 710.55 \(2025\)](#)

Does Michigan require that placing parents have separate legal representation?

Yes. However, if the placing parent is a minor, the adoption attorney or adoption agency shall offer the opportunity to be represented by an attorney before the execution of an adoption consent. [MCL § 710-55a \(2025\)](#)

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

Yes. Adoptive parents may pay for the expectant mother's adoption medical expenses, counseling expenses, legal expenses, and reasonable and actual living expenses during pregnancy and up to six weeks postpartum. [MCL 710.54\(3\) \(2025\)](#)

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

Placing parents are allowed to sign adoption consents 72 hours after the child's birth. [MCL 710.29 \(2024\)](#)

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

Yes, but revocation of consent is not automatic. They can petition to revoke their consent within five days after signing. However, the revocation is subject to the court's determination of the child's best interest. [MCL 710.29 \(2024\)](#)

Are post-adoption contact agreements legally binding in Michigan?

This issue is not addressed under Michigan law. [MCL 710.45\(5\)\(d\)](#)

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

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

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

If you witness violations of Michigan 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	Division of Child Welfare Licensing	https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/doing-business/licensing/child-welfare/contact-us/file-a-complaint
Licensed Attorney	Attorney Grievance Commission	https://www.agcml.org/for-the-public/investigation

Type of Entity	Where to Report	Contact Information
Unlicensed Adoption Facilitator	Division of Child Welfare Licensing	https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/doing-business/licensing/child-welfare/contact-us/file-a-complaint Note: If you are making a complaint regarding an facility/agency/provider operating without a license, you must indicate how you know the facility/agency/provider is operating without a license.

Child Protection in Michigan

Mandated Reporters

Among mandated reporters in Michigan are all physicians, physician's assistants, nurses, persons licensed to provide emergency medical care, and social workers. [MCL 722.623\(1\)\(a\)](#)

Learn more about mandated reporter responsibilities at <https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/adult-child-serv/abuse-neglect/childrens/mandated-reporters>.

Child Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Definitions under Michigan Law

Under Michigan law, a child means an individual under 18 years of age. [MCL 722.622\(f\)](#)

- **Child abuse** means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare that occurs through nonaccidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment by a parent, a legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare. [MCL 722.622\(g\)](#), [MCL 722.628\(3\)\(c\)](#), [MCL 750.136b\(1\)](#)
- **Child neglect** means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare that occurs through either of the following:
 - Negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care, though financially able to do so, or by the failure to seek financial or other reasonable means to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care
 - Placing a child at an unreasonable risk to the child's health or welfare by failure to intervene to eliminate that risk when the parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for the child's health or welfare can do so and has, or should have, knowledge of the risk.

[MCL 722.622\(k\)](#)

Where to Report

Contact the local county office of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to report incidents of abuse, neglect, or exploitation:

- **State Hotline:** (855) 444-3911

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 Michigan?

A newborn may be relinquished. The term **newborn** means a child who a physician reasonably believes to be not more than 72 hours old. [MCL 712.1\(k\)](#)

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

A parent may surrender the child. [MCL 712.3\(1\)](#)

Who are the designated Safe Haven/Safe Surrender providers?

The infant may be surrendered to an emergency services provider. An **emergency services provider** includes a uniformed or otherwise identified employee or contractor of a fire department, hospital, or police station when that individual is inside the premises and on duty. Emergency services provider also includes a paramedic or an emergency medical technician when either of those individuals is responding to a 911 emergency call. [MCL 712.1\(f\)](#)

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. Michigan has a registry. [MCL 710.33 et. seq.](#)

To register, individuals should complete and submit the [Verification of Notice of Intent to Claim Paternity form](#). Submitting this form will produce a search of the Michigan Putative Father Registry to determine whether or not a paternity claim has been registered for a particular mother-to-be. Anyone is eligible to request a verification of a Michigan Notice of Intent as long as the information to be verified can be supplied by the applicant. A verification of a Notice of Intent to Claim Paternity will include a signature of the searcher who performed the search and the date, but will not include a copy of the notice of intent to claim paternity form. The form will indicate whether or not an intent has been filed, and the results can be faxed or mailed to the applicant (or both). Photo ID not required.

To search the Michigan Putative Father Registry, you need to contact the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). Specifically, you'll be dealing with the [Central Paternity Registry \(CPR\)](#), which maintains records of Affidavits of Parentage filed since June 1, 1997.

Michigan Adoption Service Providers

Licensed Private Adoption Agencies

In Michigan, adoption agencies are licensed by the state Department of Health and Human Services. The following licensed agencies focus on domestic infant adoption with counseling and/or services available for expectant parents. A full listing of state-licensed agencies is available from <https://michildwelfarepubliclicensingsearch.michigan.gov/licagencysrch/>. Some agencies are licensed in multiple states.

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

- **Adoption Associates**
1338 Baldwin St
Jenison, MI 49428
Phone: (616) 667-0677
Fax: (616) 667-0920
info@adoptionassociates.net
<https://adoptionassociates.net/>
- **Adoption Partners of Michigan**
4371 State St Ste B
Saginaw, MI 48603
Phone: (989) 793-0000
info@adoptionpartnersmi.org
<https://adoptionpartnersmi.org/>
- **Bethany Christian Services**
901 Eastern Ave NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Phone: (800) 238-4269
Contact Form: <https://bethany.org/contact-us>
<https://bethany.org/>
- **Catholic Charities Washtenaw County**
4925 Packard St
Ann Arbor, MI 48108
Phone: (734) 971-9781
Fax: (734) 971-2730
Contact Form: <https://ccwcwashtenaw.org/contact/>
<https://ccwcwashtenaw.org/>
- **Catholic Charities West Michigan**
1720 Park St
Muskegon, MI 49441
Phone: (231) 726-4735
Contact Form: <https://ccwestmi.org/contact/>
<https://ccwestmi.org/>
- **Catholic Human Services**
1000 Hastings St
Traverse City, MI 49686
Phone: (231) 947-8110
Contact Form: <https://www.catholichumanservices.org/contact-chs>
<https://www.catholichumanservices.org/>
- **Greater Hopes**
2453 28th Street SW
Wyoming, MI 49519
Phone: (616) 451-0245
<https://greaterhopes.org/>

- **Keane Center for Adoption**
933 N Melborn
Dearborn, MI 48128
Phone: (313) 277-4664
info@keaneadoption.org
<https://www.keaneadoption.org/>
- **Lifeline Children's Services**
418 N Main St Ste 250
Oakland, MI 48067
Phone: (248) 621-3666
michigan@lifelinechild.org
<https://lifelinechild.org/states/michigan/>
- **Morning Star Adoption Center**
15635 W Twelve Mile Rd Ste 100
Southfield, MI 48076
Phone: (248) 483-5484
director@morningstaradoption.org
<https://morningstaradoption.org/>
- **Open Door Family Services**
1401 W Michigan Ave
Jackson, MI 49202
Phone: (517) 936-7713
<https://www.opendoorfs.org/contact>
<https://www.opendoorfs.org/>
- **Swartz Adoption Attorneys and Child Placing Agency**
4371 State St
Saginaw, MI 48603
Phone: (989) 793-0000
chris@swartzandwilson.com
<https://www.swartzadoption.com/>

Licensed Adoption Attorneys

This listing reflects the current Michigan 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.

- **Ellen J. Essig**
4540 Cooper Rd Ste 304
Cincinnati, OH 45242
Phone: (513) 698-9345
Fax: (513) 455-4720
Contact Form: <https://familyandfertilitylaw.com/contact/>
<https://familyandfertilitylaw.com/>

- **Jennifer Grahek**
491 W South St
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
Phone: (269) 492-1040
Fax: (269) 492-1042
Contact Form: <https://www.willis.law/contact-us/>
<https://www.willis.law/>
- **Amy Rebecca Johnson**
165 N Meramec Ave Ste 110
St. Louis, MO 63105
Phone: (314) 727-2266
Fax: (314) 727-2101
Contact Form: <https://www.pcblawfirm.com/contact-us/>
<http://www.pcblawfirm.com/>
- **Robert B. Kirsh**
2930 E 96th St
Indianapolis, IN 46240
Phone: (317) 575-5555
Fax: (317) 575-5631
Contact Form: <https://lovingadoptions.com/contact/>
<http://www.lovingadoptions.com/>
- **Dion E. Roddy**
2950 W Square Lake Rd Ste 212
Troy, MI 48098
Phone: (248) 792-7660
Fax: (248) 792-7761
Contact Form: <https://www.michigan-adoptions.com/contact/>
<https://www.michigan-adoptions.com/>
- **Teri Rosenzweig**
4301 Orchard Lake Rd Ste 180/150
West Bloomfield, MI 48323
Phone: (248) 432-1902
Fax: (248) 671-0450
Contact Form: <https://www.mi-adoptlaw.com/contact/>
<https://www.mi-adoptlaw.com/>

Resources

- [Academy of Adoption & Assisted Reproduction Attorneys](#)
- [AdoptChange](#)
- [Child Welfare Information Gateway: State, Territory, and Tribal Resources](#)
- [Michigan Attorney Grievance Commission](#)
- [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services: Division of Child Welfare Licensing](#)
- [Michigan Legislature Compiled Laws](#)

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.

