



Understanding Infant Adoption 7

Ohio 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 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 Ohio 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 Ohio are licensed by the Ohio 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 Ohio, Only licensed child placement agencies and licensed attorneys may arrange an adoption. See [Ohio 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 Ohio. It's crucial to ensure these out-of-state providers are licensed to provide adoption services and that they work cooperatively with an Ohio-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. An Ohio-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.

Ohio 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 Ohio's adoption laws.

Does Ohio allow independent (non-agency) adoptions?

Yes. Ohio 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 Ohio allow unlicensed adoption facilitators?

No, Ohio does not permit unlicensed adoption facilitators. Only licensed child placement agencies and licensed attorneys may arrange an adoption. [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3107.011\(A\) \(2024\)](#)

Does Ohio require that placing parents have separate legal representation?

Ohio does not require the placing parents to have legal representation. However, an attorney may not represent both the placing parents and adoptive parents. [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3107.011\(A\) \(2024\)](#)

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

Yes. Adoptive parents are allowed to pay for an expectant mother's medical expenses, legal services, and living expenses up to \$6,000, as long as the expenses are incurred during pregnancy or within 60 days after the child's birth. All expenses must be paid through the attorney or licensed agency arranging the adoption. [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3107.055 \(2025\)](#)

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

The required consent to adoption may be executed at any time after 72 hours after birth. [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3107.08 \(2025\)](#)

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

Yes, but only with court approval and upon showing that the revocation of consent is in the child's best interests. [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3107.084 \(2025\)](#)

Are post-adoption contact agreements legally binding in Ohio?

No. [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §§ 3107.62, 3107.63, 3107.65 \(2020\)](#)

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

In all states, including Ohio, 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 an Ohio adoption attorney for guidance.

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

If you witness violations of Ohio 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 Job & Family Services	https://jfs.ohio.gov/child-and-adult-protection-foster-and-adoption/report-child-or-adult-abuse-neglect/report-child-abuse-and-neglect
Licensed Attorney	Ohio State Bar Association	https://www.ohiobar.org/contact-us/
Unlicensed Adoption Facilitator	Local Law Enforcement	

Child Protection in Ohio

Child Protective Services Referrals

All hospitals, clinics, doctors, physicians, surgeons, medical examiners, nurses, social workers, and mental health professionals are considered mandated reporters. [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 2151.421 \(2025\)](#)

Child Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Definitions under Ohio Law

Under Ohio law, a child is any person under 18 years of age or a person under 21 years of age who has a physical or mental impairment; mental or psychological disorder such as an intellectual disability; physiological disorder or condition. [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 2151.011 \(2025\)](#), [Ohio Admin. Code § 5180:2-1-01 \(2025\)](#)

- **Abused Child:** Any child who is the victim of "sexual activity;" is the victim of disseminating, obtaining, or displaying "materials" or "performances" that are "harmful to juveniles" ; is endangered; exhibits evidence of any physical or mental injury or death, inflicted other than by accidental means, or an injury or death which is at variance with the history given of it; because of the acts of the child's parents, guardian, custodian, or caretaker, suffers physical or mental injury that harms or threatens to harm the child's health or welfare; or is subjected to out-of-home care child abuse. [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 2151.031 \(2023\)](#)
- **Neglected Child:** Any child who is abandoned by the child's parents, guardian, or custodian; who lacks adequate parental care because of the faults or habits of the child's parents, guardian, or custodian; whose parents, guardian, or custodian neglects the child or refuses to provide proper or necessary subsistence, education, medical or surgical care or treatment, or other care necessary for the child's health, morals, or well being; whose parents, guardian, or custodian neglects the child or refuses to provide the special care made necessary by the child's mental condition; whose parents, legal guardian, or custodian have placed or attempted to place the child in violation of the law; who, because of the omission of the child's parents, guardian, or custodian, suffers physical or mental injury that harms or threatens to harm the child's health or welfare; or who is subjected to out-of-home care child neglect. [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 2151.03 \(2006\)](#)

Where to Report

Contact the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to report incidents of abuse, neglect, or exploitation to the proper state child protection agency. For more information, visit <https://jfs.ohio.gov/child-and-adult-protection-foster-and-adoption/report-child-or-adult-abuse-neglect/report-child-abuse-and-neglect>.

- **State Hotline:** (855) 642-4453

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 Ohio?

The child must not be older than 30 days. [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 2151.3516 \(2023\)](#)

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

The parent of the child may relinquish the infant. [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 2151.3516 \(2023\)](#)

Who are the designated Safe Haven/Safe Surrender providers?

In Ohio, a parent may relinquish the infant for a Safe Haven/Safe Surrender through a law enforcement agency, a peace officer employed by the agency, or a peace officer support employee; hospital or a person granted the privilege to practice at, or employed by, the hospital; an emergency medical service organization or an emergency medical service worker employed by or providing services to the organization; or a newborn safety incubator that meets the requirements of section [2151.3532](#). [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §§ 2151.3516, 2151.3517, 2151.3532 \(2023\)](#)

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.

Ohio has a state registry; alleged fathers must complete a registration form and submit it to the Department of Job & Family Services within fifteen days of the birth of the child. If a putative father fails to submit the registration form within this timeframe, his consent to adoption proceedings is not legally required. [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §§ 3107.06, 3107.061, 3107.062, 3107.063 \(2023\)](#)

The online registry is available at <https://pfr-pub.jfs.ohio.gov/>. Those seeking to establish parentage may learn more about options and procedures at <https://www.oh-paternity.com/>.

Ohio Adoption Service Providers

Licensed Private Adoption Agencies

In Ohio, adoption agencies are licensed by the state Department of Job & Family 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 at <https://jfs.ohio.gov/child-and-adult-protection-foster-and-adoption/children-services-professionals/foster-and-adoption-agencies>. Some agencies are licensed in multiple states.

* Denotes a for-profit agency.

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

- **Adoption Circle**
400 S Fifth St Ste 304
Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: (614) 237-7222
Fax: (614) 237-8484
info@AdoptionCircle.org
<https://www.adoptioncircle.org/>

- **Adoption Link***
512 Dayton St
Yellow Springs, OH 45387
Phone: (937) 767-2466
Fax: (937) 767-2706
Email: naomi@adoptionlink.org
<http://www.adoptionlink.org/>
- **Adoption Professionals, LLC***
2758 Erie Ave 2nd Fl
Cincinnati, OH 45208
Phone: (513) 321-2229
ApAdopt@gmail.com
<http://www.adoptionprofessionals.net>
- **Adoption STAR**
7815 Cooper Rd Ste E
Cincinnati, OH 45242
Phone: (513) 631-3900
Contact Form: <https://www.adoptionstar.com/contact-us/>
<http://www.adoptionstar.com>
- **American Adoptions**
20 S 3rd St Ste 210
Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: (800) 236-7846
Contact Form: https://www.americanadoptions.com/pregnant/free_info
<https://www.americanadoptions.com/>
- **Bellefaire JCB**
One Pollock Cir
22001 Fairmount Blvd
Cleveland, OH 44118
Phone: (216) 932-2800
info@bellefairejcb.org
<http://www.bellefairejcb.org>
- **Brightside Adoption Connection***
118 W Streetsboro St Ste 88
Hudson, OH 44236
Phone: (800) 745-2198
Email: info@brightsideadoption.com
<http://www.brightsideadoption.com/>

- **Building Blocks Adoption Service, Inc.**
 52 Public Sq
 Medina, OH 44256
 Phone: (330) 725-5521
 Fax: (330) 319-8008
 Email: ohio@bbas.org
<https://bbas.org/>
- **Caring for Kids, Inc.**
 650 Graham Road Cir
 Stow, OH 44224
 Phone: (800) 254-1725
info@cfkadopt.org
<https://cfkadopt.org/>
- **Catholic Charities Diocese of Cleveland**
 7911 Detroit Ave
 Cleveland, OH 44102
 Phone: (216) 334-2900
 Contact Form: <https://www.ccdocle.org/about/contact>
<https://www.ccdocle.org>
- **Choosing Hope Adoptions**
 616 N Limestone St Top Floor
 Springfield, OH 45503
 Phone: (937) 471-2954
 Email: info@choosinghopeadoptions.com
 Contact Form: https://choosinghopeadoptions.mysamdb.com/SAM/Fm/SimpleInquiryForm_Edt.aspx
<https://www.choosinghopeadoptions.org/>
- **Just Choice**
 693 ½ High St Ste G
 Columbus, OH 43085
 Phone: (866) 989-1466
 Contact Form: <https://justchoice.org/contact-us>
<https://justchoice.org/>
- **Open Arms Adoptions**
 11 River St Ste B
 Kent, OH 44240
 Phone: (330) 583-5525
 Contact Form: <https://openarmsadopt.com/contact-us/>
<https://openarmsadopt.com/contact-us/>
- **Spirit of Faith Adoptions**
 3315 Centennial Rd Ste A-1
 Sylvania, OH 43560
 Phone: (330) 315-5077
stacy@spiritoffaithadoptions.org
<http://www.spiritoffaithadoptions.org>

Licensed Adoption Attorneys

This listing reflects the current Alabama 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.

- **Margaret "Peggy" L. Blackmore**
580 S High St Ste 120
Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: (614) 427-0999
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cainlegal@yahoo.com
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- **Susan Garner Eisenman**
4900 Reed Rd Ste 204
Columbus, OH 43220
Phone: (614) 326-1200
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adoptohio@aol.com
<https://www.susangarnereisenman.com/>
- **Ellen 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/>
- **Barbara Thornell Ginn**
1000 Tamiami Trl N Ste 501
Naples, FL 34102
Phone: (239) 471-4753
Fax: (239) 260-1883
Barbara@thw.law
<https://floridaadoptionattorney.com/>
- **Andrew Patrick Hamilton**
Heath, OH
Phone: (614) 464-4532

- **John C. Huffman**
540 W Market St
Lima, OH 45801
Phone: (419) 227-3423
Fax: (419) 228-1937
- **Jerry M. Johnson**
400 W North St
Lima, OH 45801
Phone: (419) 222-1040
Fax: (419) 227-1826
- **Lauren McClain**
PO Box 498412
Cincinnati, OH 45249
Phone: (513) 813-7043
lauren@laurenmcclainlaw.com
<https://www.laurenmcclainlaw.com/>
- **Lori S. Nehrer**
Stow, OH
Phone: (330) 928-3373

Resources

- [Academy of Adoption & Assisted Reproduction Attorneys](#)
- [AdoptChange](#)
- [Child Welfare Information Gateway: State, Territory, and Tribal Resources](#)
- [Ohio Department of Job & Family Services: Foster Care & Adoption](#)
- [Ohio Legislative Service Commission: Ohio Revised Law](#)
- [Ohio State Bar Association](#)

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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