



Understanding Infant Adoption 7

Wyoming 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 the adoptive parents. However, adoption is more than just a legal agreement; it is a life-altering experience that reflects a commitment to the 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 “freed for adoption” after a court terminates 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.

- **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 the services and providers that can assist patients in finding the appropriate support.

Pregnancy Options Counseling

Many non-profit organizations in Wyoming 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 certified 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 Wyoming are licensed by the Wyoming State Bar.
- **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.

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. Wyoming law is silent on this issue. See [Wyoming 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 Wyoming. It's crucial to ensure these out-of-state providers are licensed and collaborate with a Wyoming-certified adoption agency and attorney. 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 Wyoming-certified 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.

Wyoming 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 Wyoming's adoption laws.

Does Wyoming allow independent (non-agency) adoptions?

Yes. Wyoming allows 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 Wyoming allow unlicensed adoption facilitators?

Yes. The laws in Wyoming do not address this issue.

Does Wyoming require that placing parents have separate legal representation?

No. The laws in Wyoming do not address this issue.

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

Yes. This issue is not addressed under Wyoming law.

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

A consent can be signed any time after the child's birth. [WY Stat. § 1-22-109 \(2024\)](#)

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

No. Except under very specific circumstances, the consent is irrevocable upon signature. [WY Stat. § 1-22-109 \(2024\)](#)

Are post-adoption contact agreements legally binding in Wyoming?

No. The laws in Wyoming do not address this issue.

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

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

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

If you witness violations of Wyoming 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	Wyoming Department of Family Services	(307) 777-7564 https://dfs.wyo.gov/i-need-to-report/
Licensed Attorney	Wyoming State Bar	4124 Laramie St PO Box 109 Cheyenne, WY 82001 (307) 432-2104 https://www.wyomingbar.org/for-the-public/attorney-complaints/
Unlicensed Adoption Facilitator	Local Law Enforcement	

Child Protection in Wyoming

Child Protective Services Referrals

Any person who knows or has reasonable cause to believe or suspect that a child has been abused or neglected or who observes any child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, shall immediately report it to the child protective agency or local law enforcement agency or cause a report to be made. [WY Stat. § 14-3-205 \(2024\)](#)

Child Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Definitions under Wyoming Law

Under Wyoming law, a child is any person under the age of 18.

- **Child Abuse:** Physical or mental injury, harm, or imminent danger to the physical or mental health or welfare of a child other than by accidental means, including abandonment (unless the abandonment is a relinquishment in accordance with Wyoming Safe Haven laws), excessive or unreasonable corporal punishment, malnutrition or substantial risk thereof by reason of intentional or unintentional neglect, and/or the commission or allowing the commission of a sexual offense against a child.
- **Child Neglect:** Failure or refusal by those responsible for the child's welfare to provide adequate care, maintenance, supervision, education or medical, surgical, or any other care necessary for the child's well-being.

[WY Stat. § 14-3-202 \(2024\)](#)

Wyoming Department of Family Services

Contact the Wyoming Department of Family Services [field office for your county](#) to report incidents of abuse, neglect, or exploitation to the proper state child protection agency.

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.

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

The child must be a newborn 60 days of age or younger, as determined within a reasonable degree of medical certainty. [WY Stat. § 14-11-102 \(2024\)](#)

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

The parent of the child or the parent's designee may relinquish the newborn child. [WY Stat. § 14-11-103 \(2024\)](#)

Who are the designated Safe Haven/Safe Surrender providers?

In Wyoming, a parent may relinquish the infant for a Safe Haven/Safe Surrender through any fire station, hospital, police department, or sheriff's office that is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, as well as any other place of shelter and safety identified by the Department of Family Services that meets the requirements of rules and regulations. [WY Stat. § 14-11-102 \(2024\)](#)

Wyoming Adoption Service Providers

Licensed Private Adoption Agencies

In Wyoming, adoption agencies are certified by the state Department of 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 child placing agencies is available online from <https://dfs.wyo.gov/services/child-youth-services/adoption/>. Some agencies are licensed in multiple states.

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

- **Adoption Life Wyoming**
106 S Main St Ste F
PO Box 741
Lyman, WY 82937
Phone: (307) 212-2545
Fax: (307) 215-1467
Contact Form: <https://adoptionlife.org/contact/>
<https://adoptionlife.org/>
- **Lifeline Children's Services**
3501 Forest Dr
Cheyenne, WY 82001
Phone: (205) 967-0811
wyoming@lifelinechild.org
<https://lifelinechild.org/>
- **Wyoming Children's Society**
314 E 21st St
Cheyenne, WY 82001
Phone: (307) 632-7619
Contact Form: <https://www.wyomingcs.org/contact>
<https://www.wyomingcs.org/>

Licensed Adoption Attorneys

Below is a list of Wyoming 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.

- **Lance D. Rich**
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Resources

- [Academy of Adoption & Assisted Reproduction Attorneys](#)
- [AdoptChange](#)

- [Child Welfare Information Gateway: State, Territory, and Tribal Resources](#)
- [State of Wyoming: State Statutes & Constitution](#)
- [Wyoming Department of Family Services](#)

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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