

GUIDE TO ADOPTION IN NEVADA



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ADOPTION IN NEVADA

Thank you for your interest in adoption. This information is provided to answer some of the most commonly asked questions about adoption and adoption related services.

Nevada Revised Statute and Nevada Administrative Code 127 govern the adoption of children, and are designed to protect the best interests of children, their birth parents, persons who wish to adopt and adult adopted persons.

The goal of State adoption programs is to provide safe and permanent homes for children whose birth parents cannot care for them. The programs are child-focused, and designed to recruit and secure the best families available to meet children's needs. Therefore, prospective adoptive parents are a valuable resource to the State.

State and County child welfare agencies and licensed private agencies offer a variety of services to:

- The general public seeking basic information about adoption
- Birth parents planning adoption for their child
- Families interested in adopting waiting special needs children; and healthy infants
- Families interested in private/independent, interstate or international adoptions
- Adult adopted persons (provided either through the Nevada Adoption Registry *and/or* the child welfare office or licensed private agency who handled their adoption)
- Relatives related within the third degree of consanguinity of an adult adopted person (generally provided through the Nevada Adoption Registry)

Services offered may vary from agency to agency, so you are encouraged to contact your local public child welfare agency or licensed child placing agency directly for more specific information. Few, if any, non-special needs infants are available for adoption through the public agencies. Families interested in this type of adoption usually consider other options such, as international or private adoption. A list of public and private agencies is provided for your convenience on subsequent pages.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ADOPTION

Who can apply to adopt?

- People of any race
- People of any religion or no religious preference
- People who work outside the home
- People who rent or people who own their own homes
- People with high or low incomes
- People with or without other children
- People over age 21; however, all applicants must be at least ten years older than the person being adopted
- Married or single people; however, if married, the spouse must also be a party to the adoption.

Is there a need for adoptive families in Nevada?

There is always a tremendous need for families to adopt special needs children from the foster care system, who are unable to return to their birth families. If you are willing to adopt a special needs child who is available and awaiting placement, you need not be placed on a waiting list.

What are the basic steps in an agency special needs adoption?

- Attendance at an orientation and completion of foster/adoptive parent preparation classes;
- Completion of the home study;
- Referral and selection of an adoptive family for a particular child through a matching process;
- Visitation and placement of the child with the adoptive family;
- A minimum of six months of post-placement supervision and support services; and
- Court finalization of the adoption.

Will I have choices regarding the child I adopt?

Yes. The preferred age, ethnic background, sex of child and number of children is specified by you in your application to an agency and is discussed during the course of the home study process. Your preference is respected by the agency. Similar interests, racial background and intellect may be considered by your agency worker when placing a child with you. However, remember the more limiting you are in your choices, the longer it may take to identify a child for placement with your family.

Will I receive information about the child's background?

In an agency adoption, adopting parents are provided with all known information about the child and his/her background. In cases of abandonment, little is known; otherwise the child's history has been recorded and is shared with the adopting parents. Identifying information provided will depend on the type of adoption chosen by the birth and adoptive parents. Families adopting privately/independently may have direct contact with the birth parent(s), and may have obtained this information

on their own. Adoption staff collects and records the information as a part of the adoption service; this information is provided to the adopting parents.

Do special rules apply when adopting Native American children?

Adoption planning for Native American children requires that special regulations be followed, as outlined in the Indian Child Welfare Act. The purpose of the act is to preserve Indian families and culture, primarily by allowing Indian Tribes the option of involvement if an Indian child is to be adopted. Your social worker or local tribal authority can provide more information.

Are the adoption requirements difficult to meet?

State law requires a thorough investigation, or home study, of unrelated prospective adoptive parents. This home study process is not intended to be unnecessarily difficult, or create anxiety for families interested in adoption. Rather, the process assists the agency to determine the best family for a child or sibling group, and helps a prospective adoptive family determine whether adoption is an appropriate option for them.

Will the birth parents know who I am?

Birth and adoptive parents may decide how much identifying information they wish to share with each other. If you choose to participate in an open, semi-open, or private/independent adoption, they will know more about you.

What types of adoptive placement arrangements are available through the public and private adoption agencies?

Traditional adoption:

The adoption agency selects the adoptive family for the child. Birth parents do not read home studies and there is no contact between the birth parents and the adoptive family. Only non-identifying information is shared with the birth parents and the adoptive family.

Semi-traditional adoption:

Birth parents have an active role in choosing the adoptive family by reading home studies, with identifying information removed. There is no face-to-face contact. Adoptive parents receive only non-identifying information about the birth parents.

Semi-open adoption:

Birth parents have an active role in choosing the adoptive family by reading home studies, with identifying information removed. In addition, there is a face-to-face meeting between birth parents and the adoptive family.

Open adoption:

Adoptive arrangement whereby the birth parent(s) and the prospective adoptive parent(s) determine by mutual consent the amount of identifying information that will be shared or communicated about the other.

What is involved in a home study, and what are the requirements?

The home study is used as a screening tool as well as an educational process, where you are encouraged to have your questions and concerns about adoption answered. This process must be completed on all applicants wishing to adopt a non-related child and is required **prior** to placement of the child. The home study may be completed by a county or state agency which provides child welfare services, or by a private, licensed child-placing agency. The purpose of the home study is to help the agency social work staff become better acquainted with you and your family; to help you decide whether adoption is right for you; and to assist you in preparing for the life-long commitment of adoption. Home Study requirements are as follows:

- Completed application; a description of your family, home and family activities;
- References from people who know you well;
- Criminal history and Child Abuse/Neglect (CANS) screenings and fingerprint clearances for all adult members of the household;
- Interviews and home visits with a social worker;
- Physical examination for applicant(s) and household members;
- Review and discussion of various types of adoption;
- Discussion on types of children available for adoption, applicant's preferences; and
- Review of community and individual resources for type of child you plan to adopt

Adoptive applicants may read their home study, except for confidential references. Copies of the home study, however, can only be released to another licensed child placing agency. The study is generally completed within 90 days after the application has been submitted, unless there are unusual circumstances.

If I leave the State of jurisdiction before the adoption is finalized, do I have to give the child up, or can another agency take over the proceedings?

The agency will usually ask for courtesy supervision by a licensed adoption agency in your new location. In the case of an adoption in which the child remains in agency custody pending finalization, a request will be made to the appropriate public agency in your new location to provide supervision and services pending finalization.

What legal rights do we have with the child once the adoption is final?

After finalization, the same rights as any parent.

Can birth parents regain custody of a child placed for adoption prior to finalization?

Relinquishments and consents to adopt that are signed and executed according to Nevada Revised Statutes are irrevocable.

SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE AWAITING ADOPTION

**"I want to be adopted. I want a family of my own. I want to feel like I belong some place. I want to stop moving around and I want to feel secure."
-Twelve year old foster child**

Many children reside in foster homes in Nevada awaiting adoption. The primary mission of state and county adoption programs is to find homes for these waiting children, the majority of whom are identified as "special needs" due to histories of abuse, neglect, or exposure to drugs or alcohol during fetal development. As a result, these children may experience physical, emotional, developmental or behavioral challenges. Older children, and those who need to be placed with brothers and sisters, are also classified as special needs due to difficulties in securing adoptive homes for them.

Adoptive parents of special needs children have learned it can be a challenging, yet rewarding life experience. They have discovered these children can learn to be part of a loving family and realize their unique potential.

CHARACTERISTICS NEEDED TO PARENT A CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:

- *Commitment
- *Sense of humor
- *Flexibility
- *Advocacy skills
- *Patience
- *Tolerance
- *Optimism
- *Willingness to try new parenting skills
- *Acceptance of child's limitations
- *Understanding/empathy
- *Support network of friends/family
- *Knowledge of community resources
- *A grounding in reality
- *Unconditional love

LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE CHILDREN AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION

Families interested in adopting special needs children should contact the adoption recruiter in their area. Contact information can be found later in this guide. Families can also view photo listings and descriptions of children currently available for adoption. Follow the links below. If you find a child in which you are interested, you can email the special needs recruiter directly for further information about the circumstances of the child, and the adoption application process.

STEPS IN THE ADOPTION PROCESS OF SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

First, families interested in adoption must complete parent preparation and training coordinated by the State or county agency. The agency will provide information on resources for ongoing support, training and advocacy group activities for special needs children as part of the training process.

Second, families must participate in a home study conducted by a public or private agency worker; which includes questionnaires, interviews, personal references, a home safety inspection, law enforcement and child abuse/neglect background checks and medical examinations.

Third, families who complete the home study process must be approved by the agency to proceed to adoption. Prospective parents will be matched with a waiting child(ren) whom they would be best suited to parent, based upon factors discussed during their home study process; i.e., age, gender, types of circumstances or conditions the child (or sibling group) may present.

Fourth, if a match is found for a child with a prospective family, the adoptive parents will be given a report to read about the child known as a *social summary*. The summary is prepared by the child's case worker, and contains as much non-identifying information *as is available to the agency* concerning the child and his/her family's background. Information available to an adoptive family on a child or sibling group will vary; is determined by their age, physical and mental conditions, and the circumstances surrounding their removal (or voluntary release) from their family of origin.

Details in the social summary may include, but are not limited to:

- Child and family's social history
- Reasons for adoptive placement
- Child's personality and temperament
- Child's self help skills and functioning level in comparison to his/her age
- Child's residential placement history
- Child's/sibling's history of abuse/neglect/abandonment, if applicable
- Information on child's siblings and strength of their relationship, if applicable
- Child and family's health and medical history, including known hereditary conditions or problems
- Child's birth records and developmental history
- Child's psychological and psychiatric history and reports, if applicable
- Information on child's specific special needs
- Child's intellectual functioning and educational reports, if applicable

The exchange of the information contained in the social summary is intended to assist the prospective adoptive family in further understanding the child and his/her current and possible future needs. It is also utilized to determine whether the family will require financial and/or medical assistance to meet those needs. Due to its vital importance, a copy of the summary and other pertinent records available will be provided to the adoptive parents by the child's case worker at the time he/she is placed in their home.

Fifth, families who have reviewed the child's background and wish to pursue an initial meeting will have one arranged by the agency worker. Other visits will be scheduled, depending upon the results of the first meeting; and if it appears to be in the best interest of both the child and the family. Successful visitation will lead to the arrangement of a date for the child's placement in the home by the agency. Factors such as age, the child's adjustment to the family, and his/her special needs will be considered in the commitment to a move-in date.

Finally, the child must reside a minimum of six months in an adoptive home before he/she may be legally adopted by the family, which is known as finalization. A case worker will supervise the placement and make periodic visits up until finalization by the court. The worker will also assist the family with any issues or circumstances that may arise related to the child's adjustment. The supervision period may be extended, depending upon the child's needs and those of the family before the

court's issuance of a decree of adoption. The family will need to retain the services of an attorney to finalize, and the agency worker will provide details on the process, as well as information on available assistance with legal costs, well in advance of the final court date.

Due to the challenges adoption of children with special needs may present, the agency worker will review options for post adoptive counseling and possible financial assistance which may be available to assist the family in meeting their child's ongoing needs.

SUBSIDIZED ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Adoption assistance programs were developed to encourage and support the adoption of special needs children from foster care, by enabling families to adopt without placing an undue burden on the family. Subsidies are provided in four basic categories: medical coverage, limited reimbursement of adoption related costs, social services and financial assistance. Families adopting special needs children through private agencies may also be eligible, and are encouraged to apply.

Types of Subsidies Available in Nevada

1. Federal Adoption Assistance

Public Law 96-272, the *Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act of 1980*, required States to establish an adoption subsidy program for children with special needs who are eligible for Title IV-E funding under the Social Security Act. Eligible children may receive financial and/or medical assistance. The subsidy payment must be based on the child's special needs rather than the family's income; and may not exceed the foster care payment rate. Federal law mandates that the resources of the adoptive parents cannot be considered when determining a child's eligibility for Title IV-E adoption assistance, however, the circumstances of the family and the needs of the child must both be taken into consideration when determining the nature and amount of assistance.

2. State Adoption Assistance

Nevada also offers a state funded adoption subsidy program for children not eligible under the Federal program. Eligible children may also receive financial and/or medical assistance to meet their ongoing special needs. Subsidy assistance for the state program is also based on the child's needs rather than the family's income. Financial assistance provided cannot exceed the established foster care rate.

3. Special Needs Criteria

A child for whom placement with an adoptive family is made more difficult because of the child's age, race, number of siblings, or because the child suffers from a severe or chronic medical, physical, mental or emotional condition is considered to be "special needs." Generally, a child over the age of five years, a member of a sibling group who need to be placed together, a member of a minority ethnic group, and/or children of any age who experience behavioral, developmental, physical or medical challenges are considered special needs. Children *not* defined, as special needs are not eligible for subsidy assistance.

What kind of assistance is available?

1. Medical Coverage

Eligible children would receive medical care through the State's medical assistance program (Medicaid). This service may assist the family in meeting a child's medical needs, including pre-existing medical conditions.

2. Financial Payments

A monthly grant to reimburse expenses related to the child's care may be approved; however, it cannot exceed the established payment rate for the child if they were in foster care.

3. Nonrecurring Adoption Finalization Costs

Families adopting special needs children may be reimbursed for fees related to finalization of the adoption up to a fixed amount. These fees may include:

- Legal costs-court filing fees and attorney fees not to exceed \$250.00 per eligible child;
- Agency fees paid for completion of home study; and/or
- Travel costs related to visiting the child prior to placement with the family

How do I apply for assistance?

You and your adoption worker complete a subsidy application packet together that is submitted to your local DCFS office or county agency which provides child welfare services for a determination of eligibility. It must include professional documentation of the child's special needs. The amount and type of subsidy is determined by considering the child's needs along with the adoptive parents' circumstances, resources and ability to cover the child's cost of care.

When should I apply for assistance?

Adoption subsidy applications and agreements must be approved prior to finalization of the adoption in order for the agreement to be valid. The application should be submitted well in advance of the time you plan to go to court.

Once you and your worker have settled on the type and amount of assistance, an agreement will be sent to you for your signature following submission and approval of your application by the State or county agency staff. You will sign and return it to

your State or county office for administrative approval. An agreement is not approved until all parties to the agreement have signed and dated it.

If you are adopting an eligible special needs child and require ongoing assistance through the subsidy program, *you must not finalize the adoption* until your subsidy application and agreements are approved by State or county agency officials.

What if my application for assistance is denied?

If you make application for subsidy assistance and you do not agree with the agency's decision regarding your application, you may request a conference with the State or county agency administrative staff to review the decision. If after the conference you still disagree with the agency's decision, you may request a fair hearing to further review your application.

ADOPTION EXCHANGES: LOCATING FAMILIES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

The Division of Child and Family Services belongs to The Adoption Exchange that helps locate adoptive families for children with special needs. The Adoption Exchange is headquartered in Aurora, Colorado with branch offices in Las Vegas, Nevada; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Salt Lake City, Utah; and St. Louis, Missouri. The Las Vegas branch office hosts a lending library that can be used free of charge by pre-adoptive and post-adoptive parents to obtain information and resources.

The exchange produces photo-listing booklets featuring children who need permanent "forever" families. Families who have completed a home study may also register with the exchange to help them in their search for children they wish to adopt.

Nevada registers children with special needs who do not have an identified family. The exchange publishes the child's picture, a brief description of the child's background and the type of family that is being sought for the child. The information is used to help locate other prospective adoptive parents for a child.

"A Welcome Home" is provided by Cox Communications and features special needs children in Nevada who are available for adoption. For more information on the adoption of special needs children, contact the Special Needs Recruiter and Trainer in your area.

- Clark County
(702) 455-4024
- Washoe County
(775) 337-4502
- Rural Nevada
(775) 687-4943
(888)423-2659 (Toll Free inside Nevada)

PUBLIC AGENCY INFANT PROGRAM (Washoe County only)

Families interested in the healthy infant program must first be determined eligible for the agency's inquiry list. *Individuals with two or more birth or non-special needs adopted children currently in the home, or who have adult children who resided at home as minors for at least 18 months, are not eligible for the inquiry list.*

Those who apply and are found eligible for placement on the inquiry list will receive written confirmation from the agency, and will be contacted periodically during the waiting period to determine if they are still interested in adoption. *Further, if any of the following has occurred, your name(s) will be withdrawn from the list:*

- You have given birth to a child
- You have adopted a non-special needs child
- You move out of state
- You move and the agency is unable to locate you

The length of time an eligible family will remain on the inquiry list for an infant varies. Once your name reaches the top of the list, you will be contacted by a social worker to begin the investigative process for approval to adopt, known as a home study. Therefore, it is important for the family to keep the agency informed of any address or contact information changes to avoid being withdrawn from the list due to the agency's inability to find you.

Those eligible families who successfully complete the home study process and are approved to adopt, will be placed on the "approved and waiting list" until a child becomes available. If an adoptive placement does not occur within one year, the family's home study must be updated to review the following:

- Their continued interest in adoption;
- Any changes in family circumstances, living situation or health; and/or
- Any changes that may affect their continued eligibility to adopt

If the updated study identifies any areas of concern that would result in denial of an adoptive placement, the individual(s) name will be removed from the waiting list.

Once a baby is available, an agency social worker will contact you and make arrangements to meet with you to discuss the child's background (birth records, medical history, etc.). If you wish to continue with the placement, pre-placement visits are scheduled, and final placement arrangements are made. The length of time this will take varies, depending upon the child's developmental stage and other considerations.

There is a minimum six-month supervision period by the agency social worker, once the child is placed in the home, prior to finalization of the adoption. This is your opportunity to ask questions, and receive information about community resources from the social worker, who is required to make monthly visits to the adoptive home through the actual legal adoption. The supervision period may be extended depending upon on the needs of the child and the adoptive family.

PRIVATE AGENCY INFANT PROGRAMS

Private licensed child placing agencies are available to assist families interested in adopting healthy infants. Depending upon the agency, adoption of both American and foreign born children may be available. Procedures and length of time to receive an infant vary from agency to agency. Please contact the individual agency for further information.

Prospective adoptive parents and birth parents that have already connected with one another, and plan to pursue a private placement arrangement **must** do the following:

- Notify the State or County agency or select a private agency to assist them in the arrangement, and
- Have a home study completed **prior** to the placement of the baby in their home

It is important for families planning to adopt to understand that a placement cannot be made until after the birth mother signs the Consent to Adopt, which may not occur until at least 72 hours after the birth of the baby. If birth parents are married to each other, neither one can sign the Consent to Adopt sooner than the 72 hour waiting period. If the birth father is not married to the birth mother, he may sign the Consent to Adopt prior to the baby's birth. Both parents must consent to the adoption or have his/her parental rights terminated by a court order prior to finalization of the adoption. If the home study is not completed prior to the birth of the baby, the birth parent(s) have the following options:

1. Take the baby home;
2. Arrange for the baby's extended stay in the hospital (if the hospital permits it); or
3. Permit the adoption agency to place the baby in temporary foster care

Once the home study has been completed and the birth parent(s) have signed consents, the social worker will arrange for the baby's release to the adoptive parents.

INTERSTATE ADOPTION

The State or County agency, which provides child welfare services, or a licensed child-placing agency, can assist birth parents planning to place their child out-of-state, and provide services to Nevada families planning to adopt children from another state. Arrangements to place children across state lines **must** follow the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) regulations, and a State/County worker or private agency social worker must be involved to help with this procedure. Because placement laws may differ from state to state, birth parents, prospective adoptive parents, and attorneys handling interstate adoptions are encouraged to contact a State/County or private agency as soon as possible

regarding the home study and placement requirements. Compact requirements should be discussed early in the adoption plan so that the placement is not delayed. Nevada's ICPC Deputy Compact Administrator can be reached at (775) 684-4418.

BASIC GUIDELINES TO BE FOLLOWED:

A. Nevada children leaving the state for adoptive placement.

Birth parent(s) who have arranged to place their child for adoption with a family who resides outside the State of Nevada (or the attorney handling the adoption for the prospective adoptive parents), must contact the State/County or private agency in their area and advise them of the intended placement plan. A worker will be assigned to help the birth parent(s) with the out-of-state (ICPC) placement paperwork, obtain the social and medical history information to be provided to the adoptive parents, and provide other related adoption counseling services.

The ICPC referral is actually a request from the birth parent(s) for a home study to be completed on the family they have selected. As this is a private, open adoption, the names, addresses and telephone numbers of all parties must be listed. This request is signed by the birth parent(s) and forwarded through the ICPC compact administrator in the birth parent(s) residence state; to the state ICPC administrator in the state where the prospective adoptive parents reside.

The home study for the out-of-state family must be approved by both the sending state (Nevada) and receiving state (other state), before the child can be placed with the adoptive family. If the home study has not been approved by both states at the time of the child's birth, the birth parent may choose to take the child home, agree to a temporary foster home placement, or under some circumstances, the hospital may agree to care for the baby for a very short period of time.

If the family has been approved and the birth parent(s) feel that adoption is still best for their child, they may sign the Consent to Adopt to the specific family they have chosen to adopt their child. The consent documents are provided by the adoptive family's attorney and cannot be signed less than 72 hours following the birth of the child. Birth parents have the right to read the home study before signing the consents. Once consents are signed, the home study is approved, and the ICPC requirements are met, the child can be placed with the adoptive parents. Nevada law requires that a licensed social worker witness the signing of any Consent to Adopt (other than when one of the adoptive parents is related to the child within the third degree of consanguinity).

The birth parents and adoptive parents may make their own independent arrangements for ongoing contact. The social worker remains available to provide post placement counseling services to the birth parent(s).

In the event the adoptive family selected for placement is not approved or the family withdraws from the arrangement, the birth parent(s) may ask the

State/County or private agency for placement assistance. Remember, both the public and private agencies have lists of adoptive families approved and waiting to adopt that the birth parents may consider. The birth parent(s) may also select another family.

B. Children from other states entering Nevada for adoptive placement.

The procedure for Nevada families planning to adopt a child from out of state is as follows:

- The State/County or private agency must receive written notification of the birth parent(s) intent to place their child with the Nevada family. The birth parents will sign the ICPC referral to request a home study on the Nevada family.
- The adoption agency will then begin the application and home study process. Sixty days are allowed to complete the home study, so it is important that the agency be notified well in advance of the baby's birth or intended date of placement
- A copy of the completed home study is sent through ICPC channels in Nevada to the birth parent(s)' home state for approval.
- When both states have approved the placement, Consents to Adopt are signed by the birth parent(s), and then the child can be released for placement in Nevada.
- The agency social worker will supervise the placement pending court finalization, which may occur in either state.

For further information about interstate adoption, contact the ICPC Deputy Compact Administrator in your state. Each state has one and your assigned social worker should be able to assist you. If you are planning your adoption through a private attorney or other adoption agency, these individuals are also required to advise both the birth and prospective adoptive parents that compact requirements must be followed before the child can be placed.

INTERNATIONAL / INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

International adoption involves the adoption of a child from a country other than the United States, or the adoption of a child from the United States by a resident of a foreign country.

International adoption can be a complex process. Laws regarding adoption and emigration requirements vary from country to country. Consequently, interested adoptive applicants must work directly with a licensed private child-placing agency approved to handle these types of adoptions, and the federal Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) to ensure all legal requirements are met.

Families must have an approved home study, which must be completed by a State or County child welfare agency, *or* licensed child-placing agency. The home study process is initiated when the agency receives a request/referral from the international adoption agency or BCIS.

For more information on the BCIS requirements in international adoptions, please access the BCIS website at <http://uscis.gov/graphics/index.htm> or consult with your adoption agency.

FEES FOR ADOPTION SERVICES

The Division of Child and Family Services charges fees to adoptive applicants for certain adoption services. Fees paid by Nevada families, whether adopting children from Nevada or another state or country, cover completion of the home study, home visits with the child and family for a minimum period of six months (or as required by another country from which a child is adopted), and help with finalizing the adoption. Fees charged to adoptive families living outside of Nevada cover all necessary services for Nevada birth parents and completion of the ICPC requirements.

ADOPTION FEE POLICY

1. A fee is charged to all prospective adoptive parents of a non-special needs child.
2. No fee is charged for the adoption of a special needs child in the custody of a public agency.
3. No fee is charged for relative adoptions within the third degree of consanguinity or stepparent adoptions.
4. Service fees for Nevada adoptive family:
 - a) The maximum fee for Nevada residents is based on the estimated cost to the agency to provide the service; and is assessed at a percentage of the maximum fee, according to the family's annual unadjusted gross income.
 - b) Payments are to be made as follows:
 - 1) Interstate adoption: 50% at the time of application, and the remaining 50% at time of placement of a child;
 - 2) International adoption: 50% at the time of application. The remaining 50% is payable if post placement services are provided; or
 - 3) Agency and specific adoptions: 50% at time of application; and the remaining 50% at time of placement.
 - c) The reapplication fee for a Nevada family is reduced by one-half, if the home study is being updated within five years of a prior study completed by the agency. If placement of a specific child does not occur and the family requests services for placement of another specific child within five years, the pre-placement fee is not collected again.
 - d) If the prospective adoptive family withdraws their application prior to the social worker's interviews, one-half of the pre-placement fees is refunded.
 - e) Expedited Home Study: An additional fee of \$750.00 is charged for an expedited home study. Fee is payable at the time of application. An expedited home study may be requested to facilitate the imminent birth or placement of an infant. This assures that a home study will be completed within 30 days of the application filing date. This service is

subject to availability of agency staff to complete the home study within 30 days.

5. The fee for a Nevada family may be waived or reduced by the administrator or designee, due to extenuating circumstances, on a case-by-case basis.
6. Service fees for an out-of-state adoptive family – Interstate placement:
The fee for an out-of-state adoptive family is \$3,000.00. The fee covers interstate services to the Nevada birth parent(s). The total fee must be paid prior to processing interstate request.

All payments, as indicated above, must be made by certified check or money order made out to the Nevada State Treasurer. The sliding scale fee schedule is as follows:

Adoption Fee Schedule (Effective March 1, 2003)				
(1.) Fee Schedule for Agency Adoption and Private Adoption (Birth/Adoptive Parent are Nevada Residents)				
Fees Payable as Follows:				
Annual Gross Income	Percent of Max Fee	Total Fee	Pre-placement (50% with Application)	Placement (50% at Placement)
> \$19,999	5%	\$550	\$275	\$275
\$20,000- \$29,999	10%	\$1,100	\$550	\$550
\$30,000- \$39,999	15%	\$1,650	\$825	\$825
\$40,000- \$49,000	20%	\$2,200	\$1,100	\$1,100
\$50,000- \$59,999	30%	\$3,300	\$1,650	\$1,650
\$60,000- \$69,000	50%	\$5,500	\$2,750	\$2,750
\$70,000- \$79,000	70%	\$7,700	\$3,850	\$3,850
\$80,000- \$89,000	90%	\$9,900	\$4,950	\$4,950
\$90,000- \$100,000	100%	\$11,000	\$5,500	\$5,500

(2.) Fee Schedule for Interstate Placements (Adoptive Parent Nevada Family/Birth Parent Out of State) and International Adoptions

Fees Payable as Follows:

Annual Gross Income	Percent of Max. Fee	Total Fee	Pre-Placement (50% with Application)	Placement (50% at Placement)
> \$19,999	5%	\$400	\$200	\$200
\$20,000-\$29,999	10%	\$800	\$400	\$400
\$30,000-\$39,000	15%	\$1,200	\$600	\$600
\$40,000-\$49,000	20%	\$1,600	\$800	\$800
\$50,000-\$59,000	30%	\$2,400	\$1,200	\$1,200
\$60,000-\$69,000	50%	\$4,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
\$70,000-\$79,000	70%	\$5,600	\$2,800	\$2,800
\$80,000-\$89,000	90%	\$7,200	\$3,600	\$3,600
\$90,000-\$100,000	100%	\$8,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
Interstate Services to Nevada Birth Parent(s)			\$3,000 Flat Fee (Paid by the Adoptive Parent(s))	

FINGERPRINTING

Adoptive families are required to pay local and FBI fingerprint processing costs for all adults, age 18 or older, living in the home. Cost is \$51.25 per applicant, in addition to any fees charged for obtaining the prints.

BIRTH PARENTS: PLANNING ADOPTION FOR YOUR CHILD

Should I consider adoption for my child?

An unplanned pregnancy may require you to make plans and decisions about your child's future that may be very difficult. Social workers and other professionals are available to help you through this process. Adoption is a legal procedure, which cannot be reversed once you sign a relinquishment or consent for a specific family to adopt your child. Be certain you take adequate time to carefully consider all options before making this decision. Counseling services are available through your local State, County, or private adoption agency.

What if I decide to pursue adoption?

There are two ways to plan an adoptive placement. One is for you to work with a State, County, or private agency to place your child with one of its approved and waiting families. The other is to have the agency assist you in arranging for the baby's placement with a family whom you know would be interested in adopting your child.

What if I decide to request placement through a State, County, or private agency?

If you decide to use the placement services of an agency, a social worker will be assigned to help you. You may choose to participate in selecting the adoptive family by reading home studies or meeting families. Also, you may allow the agency to decide who the adoptive family will be. If you require medical or financial assistance, the agency worker can assist in identifying resources, which may be of help to you. Ongoing counseling is also given in preparation for the child's birth and what can be expected after the baby is born.

Because you must wait at least 72 hours after the baby's birth before signing a relinquishment or consent, your social worker will discuss what temporary placement plans you prefer for your baby after he or she is born. You may decide to:

1. Take the baby home and care for him or her yourself; or
2. Allow the baby to remain in the hospital (if permitted by the hospital); or
3. Permit the agency to place the baby in temporary foster care. You may ask for the child's return to you at any time before you sign relinquishments or consents

Once you have signed the relinquishment or consent for the child's adoption, you will receive a copy of all paperwork for your records. The social worker will then arrange for the baby to be released to the adoptive family.

What if I find a family whom I want to adopt my baby?

If you find a family whom you want to adopt your baby, you may make plans directly with that family. In that case, the family applies to have a home study completed and the agency social worker will meet with you to confirm your adoption placement

plans with that specific family. Some birth parents prefer this option because all identifying information is exchanged and it is possible to make plans for some type of ongoing contact after the baby is placed (letters, pictures and/or visits). Also in these types of adoptions, the adoptive parents can sometimes assist you with payment of expenses related to the pregnancy.

If you decide on a plan for adoption with a specific family, you must wait 72 hours before signing consents and the family must have an approved home study completed by an adoption agency before the baby can be placed.

POST ADOPTION SERVICES

Once an adoption is finalized, adoptive families, adult adopted persons, birth parents or other birth family members of the adoptee, may require information and assistance from the public or private agency that handled the adoption. Post adoption services, and information that may be accessed, varies from agency to agency, and is affected by the circumstances that were agreed upon at the time of the child's adoption. Generally, these services include:

- Information and services referrals
- Resources on parenting training materials and classes
- Agency sponsored adoptive support groups
- Information and resources for children with special needs
- Information on regional and national support groups and advocacy organizations for adoptive families
- Adoptive search organizations for adoptee and birth family members
- Information on Nevada's State Adoption Registry

A list of addresses and telephone numbers for both the public and private adoption agencies in Nevada are included here as well as, information on parent support groups, resources for special needs children, adoptive search organizations and other issues involving adoption.

THE NEVADA ADOPTION REUNION REGISTRY

The Nevada Adoption Reunion Registry was established in 1979 and is maintained by the Division of Child and Family Services. This mutual consent registry assists adult adoptee, birth parents, and relatives in conducting searches for each other if the other eligible party or parties have filed applications agreeing to the release of identifying information. Those eligible to register are:

1. Birth parents who relinquished their rights or consented to a child's adoption through a public or private adoption agency in Nevada, or whose parental rights were terminated by court order in Nevada.
2. Adult adopted persons age 18 and over, whose adoption was finalized in a Nevada Court

3. Birth relatives related within the third degree of consanguinity of the adoptee. Written consent from the birth parent is required before identifying information regarding the adoptee can be released to a relative.

All eligible parties must have applications on file for the matching process to proceed. *Individuals may withdraw their application at any time.*

Non-identifying information:

Adoption records may also be accessed to assist adoptee, birth and adoptive parents who may request non-identifying information. The request must be made in writing. Examples of non-identifying information may include:

- Age of the birth parents or adoptive parents at the time of adoption
- Height, weight, complexion, eye and hair coloring of the parents
- Education and occupation of the parents
- Health histories

For further information or to request an application, contact the Nevada Adoption Registry at 4126 Technology Way, Third Floor, Carson City, Nevada 89706, (775) 684-4415, or follow the link to the Nevada Adoption Registry page.

INTERNATIONAL SOUNDEX REUNION REGISTRY

P.O. Box 2312
Carson City, Nevada 89702
(775) 882-7755
www.issrr.net

International Sounded Reunion Registry is a non-profit humanitarian service incorporated in 1981 "to service and promote, through the Reunion Registry, the interests of any adult persons desiring and seeking a reunion with next-of-kin by birth". ISRR began as a supportive system primarily concerned with the needs of people whose lives are touched by adoption and has expanded to encompass the needs of all persons separated from family members by divorce, foster care, and acts of war. ISRR provides a confidential and voluntary identification system on a national and international scale and provides services to users free of charge.

ISRR is strictly a Reunion Registry and does not perform a search service or provide search assistance to its registrants.

ISRR provides the following services:

1. Reunion Registry for any adult person 18 years of age or older, desiring and seeking reunion with next-of-kin by birth through voluntary registration in the ISRR (i.e., a birth mother searching for her child, and adoptee searching for birth family members, siblings in search of each other)
2. Medical Alert System: In response to appeals from adult adoptee and from adoptive parents of children still in minority, ISRR has devised a medical alert system in order to remedy situations where lack of access to family pedigrees of two or more generations denies treatments that could prevent progressive damage and/or death

3. Post-Match Consultant Service: ISRR provides assistance to adult adoptee and their extended families who are matched through the Registry and who need professional assistance as relationships are established

Funding: ISRR is funded entirely through individual and affiliated contributions.

This is a free public service international registry.

STATE OFFICES PROVIDING ADOPTION INFORMATION AND ADOPTION SERVICES

Division of Child and Family Services

Battle Mountain Office

145 E. 2nd Street
Battle Mountain, Nevada 89820
(775) 635-8172

Pahrump Office

2280 Calvada, Suite 302
Pahrump, Nevada 89048
(775) 727-8497

Carson City Office

1677 Old Hot Springs Road, Suite B
Carson City, Nevada 89706
(775) 687-4943

Winnemucca Office

475 W. Haskell #7
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445
(775) 623-6555

Elko Office

1010 Ruby Vista Drive, Suite 101
Elko, Nevada 89801
(775) 753-1300

Yerington Office

215 W. Bridge Street, Suite 4
Yerington, Nevada 89447
(775) 463-3151

Ely Office

740 Park Avenue
Ely, Nevada 89301
(775) 289-1640

Silver Springs Office

P.O. Box 1026
3959 Highway 50 West
Silver Springs, Nevada 89429
(775) 577-1200

Fallon Office

1735 Kaiser Street
Fallon, Nevada 89406
(775) 423-8566

Tonopah Office

P.O. Box 1491
#2 Frankie Street, Annex Building
Tonopah, NV 89049
(775) 482-6626

Hawthorne Office

P.O. Box 1508
1000 C Street
Hawthorne, Nevada 89415

Lovelock Office

P.O. Box 776
535 Western Street
Lovelock, Nevada 89419
(775) 273-7157

Nevada ICPC/Adoption Specialist

4126 Technology Way, Third Floor
Carson City, NV 89706
(775) 684-4400

COUNTY OFFICES PROVIDING ADOPTION INFORMATION AND ADOPTION SERVICES

Clark County

Department of Family Services:

- West Neighborhood Care Center
6171 W. Charleston Blvd
Las Vegas, NV 89146
(702) 486-0000
- Central Neighborhood Care Center
333 N. Rancho Drive, 2nd floor
Las Vegas, Nevada 89107
(702) 455-7200
- South Neighborhood Care Center
522 E Lake Mead Pkwy #5
Henderson, NV 89015
(702) 455-7900
- East Neighborhood Care Center
3075 E. Flamingo #108
Las Vegas, NV 89121
(702) 486-7500
- North Neighborhood Care Center
4538 W Craig Rd #290
N. Las Vegas, NV 89032
Main # 486-5610

Washoe County

Department of Social Services
350 South Center Street, Suite 250
Reno, Nevada 89520
(775) 337-4400

PRIVATE CHILD PLACING (ADOPTION) AGENCIES

<p>CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF SOUTHERN NEVADA 2077 E. Sahara Avenue, Suite B Las Vegas, Nevada 89104 (702) 385-3351</p> <p>Services Offered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis Pregnancy Counseling- No charge • Adoption Planning • Resources and assistance for birth parents • Home studies: agency and private • Adoptive parent education • Child placement and supervision • Local, interstate and international • Facilitation <p>All races and religions welcome. Reasonable fees with sliding scale</p>	<p>LDS FAMILY SERVICES 513 S. 9th Street Las Vegas, Nevada 89101 (702) 385-1072</p> <p>Services Offered:</p> <p>Infant Adoption Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption/Birth parent services (no charge for pregnancy counseling) • Provides pregnancy counseling for all residents of the community regardless of religious affiliation • Adoption services • Foster care • Birth parent support groups <p>Eligibility for couples wishing to adopt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires LDS Church membership • An authorization form signed by the individual's church leader is required with the exception of pregnancy counseling <p>Fees: Sliding scale</p>

<p>CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES OF NORTHERN NEVADA 500 E. 4th Street Reno, Nevada 89512 (775) 322-7073</p> <p>Services Offered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth Parent assistance, resources, and services at no charge • Adoption Planning • Home Studies: Private and Agency Adoptions • Adoptive parent education • Child placement and Post-placement Supervision • Interstate Compact Services <p>All races and religions welcome Reasonable fees with sliding scale</p>	<p>PREMIER ADOPTION AGENCY 590 Mesquite Boulevard, Suite 202B Mesquite, Nevada 89027 (702) 346-4922 or (800) 787-0714</p> <p>Services Offered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic and international home studies • Post-placement services • Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services consultation • Free counseling for birth parents • Relinquishment services for private adoptions <p>All services to birth parents are free Fees for adoptive parents, attorneys and other agencies: please inquire</p>

<p>THE ADOPTION ALLIANCE 1785 E. Sahara Avenue #340 Las Vegas, Nevada 89104 (702) 968-1986 phone (702) 968-1989 fax</p> <p>Services Offered:</p> <p>Pregnancy Counseling Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling service to teens and women facing an unplanned pregnancy • Support related to the adoption decision-making process • Birth parent support groups and post-placement counseling <p>All services are free to birth parents</p> <p>Domestic Adoption:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home studies and post-placement services • Workshops and training for adoptive parents • Private adoptions facilitation • Elective home studies • Infant boarding care <p>Fees: Vary per program</p> <p>International Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home studies • Post-placement supervision • Education and resource information <p>Fees: Vary by program</p>	<p>A CHILD'S DREAM OF NEVADA, INC. 956 Lakeshore Boulevard, #7400 Incline Village, Nevada 89451 (775) 831-1904 or (800) 585-4828</p> <p>4550 W. Oakey Boulevard, Suite 111B Las Vegas, Nevada 89102 (702) 308-4071</p> <p>Services Offered:</p> <p>Birth Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All services to birth parents are free • Pregnancy and post-placement counseling • Formulation of adoption plan • Resource referrals • Cradle care • Legal services availability <p>Adoptive Parents: Assistance in domestic and international adoptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-placement screening and home studies • Formulation of adoption plan in domestic cases • Post-placement supervision and services <p>Sliding scale for fees for adoptive parents. No religious preference. Referral for legal services.</p>

ADOPTION SUPPORT INFORMATION AND SERVICES

Whatever your interest in adoption, it may be helpful to speak with other parents, or with individuals who specialize in serving children and families. The following agencies are available to answer your questions and provide resource information, or contact the adoption agency in your area.

ADOPTION SUPPORT INFORMATION AND SERVICES	
<p>NEVADA CHILDREN'S CENTER 2929 S. Decatur Boulevard Las Vegas, Nevada 89102 (702) 221-4900 www.nvvc.org</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers support and problem solving strategies to adopted and prospective adopted children as well as their families 	<p>ADOPTION EXCHANGE 1516 E. Tropicana, Suite 240 Las Vegas, Nevada 89119 (702) 436-6335 www.adoptex.org</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers information and referral services and resource materials for adoptive families
<p>NEVADA PARENTS ENCOURAGING PARENTS (800) 216-5188 www.nvpep.org</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides parent support and advocacy services in special education and adoption issues 	<p>MEDICAID CUSTOMER SERVICE (702) 486-1550 Southern Nevada (775) 684-0800 Northern Nevada</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to questions and problems related to Medicaid coverage and services
<p>STATE OF NEVADA CHILD AND ADOLESCENT SERVICES (702) 486-6100 Southern Nevada (775) 688-1600 Northern Nevada</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health evaluation and treatment services for children 	

SUGGESTED READING ON ADOPTION ISSUES

Below are a list of readings and videos that you may find helpful.

To order these materials or obtain additional information, visit your local book store or contact Spaulding for Children at (248) 443-7080 or visit their website at www.spaulding.org

Books

*Brodzinsky, David M., et. al., **Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self.***

Authors have used the voices of adoptee themselves to trace their adoption experiences from infancy through late adulthood. This book utilizes Erikson's seven stage life cycle as its model to address these developmental life experiences.

*Delaney, Richard, **Troubled Transplants: Unconventional Strategies for Helping Disturbed Foster and Adoptive Children.***

This book is a useful tool for both professionals and parents alike when dealing with foster and adoptive children with psychological issues. Activities and ideas are practical and easy to understand.

*Fahlberg, Vera, M.D., **A Child's Journey through Placement,** 1991.*

Provides information for professionals and parents to support children who've experienced foster care and other out-of-home placement. Serves as an example of what children available for adoption may have experienced.

*Girard, Linda Walvoord, **Adoption is for Always.***

This book helps children explore their questions and concerns about adoption in a safe and loving way through the story of a child who was adopted at birth.

*Hickman, Martha Whitmore, **Robert Lives with his Grandparents,** 1995.*

This book deals with the struggles youth face when they go to live with grandparents when their own parents are unable to care for them. Robert loves his grandparents but is embarrassed that he lives with them. He goes on to discover that some of his other classmates don't live with their parents, either, which makes him feel better.

*Jarrat-Jewett, Claudia, **Helping Children Cope With Separation,** 1994.*

Explains the grieving process children experience through adoption, separation from birth family or foster parents, or through death or divorce.

*Joy, Deborah Berry, **Benjamin Bear,** 1988.*

Children's book addressing the feelings many children experience resulting from their birth parents' inability to care for them, and on their subsequent adoption. Opportunities and guidelines are provided for discussion.

Johnson, Patricia Irwin, ***Adoption is a Family Affair! What Relatives and Friends Must Know***, 2001.

This book is based upon real life experiences of adoptive families dealing with issues of forming a new family model and their experiences with friends and relatives. It serves as a tool for those who care about adoptive families, and helps them to gain a better understanding of their experience.

Price, Jerome A., et. al., ***the Right to Be the Grown-up: Helping Parents Be Parents to Their Difficult Teens***, 2003.

This handbook assists parents in dealing with the special problems that youth face today, and offers strategies to address them. This book is highly recommended for wary parents of troubled adolescents, and was developed by the Michigan Family Institute.

Zisk, Mary, ***the Best Single Mom in the World: How I Was Adopted***, 2001.

This book is written for children ages 4-8 years old. The story discusses how excited a child is about her adoption by a single mother. The story also addresses how the single mother wanted to share her life with a child. There are beautiful illustrations to go along with this cute story.

Videotapes

“Attention Deficit Disorder,” Dr. John Baugh.

This videotape explains how to identify children who are experiencing hyperactivity and offers suggestions on how to help them. (20 minutes)

“Black Boys Are Wonderful,” Institute for Black Parenting, Los Angeles, CA.

This video consists of boys presenting in their own words, the plight of African American boys of all ages who are backlogged in the child welfare system waiting for permanent adoptive homes. (16 minutes)

“First, they’re Children,” Spaulding for Children and Michigan Department of Mental Health, 1989.

This videotape depicts the experiences of families rearing children with developmental disabilities. (25 minutes)

“Multiple Transitions: A Young Child’s Point of View on Foster Care and Adoption,” The Infant Parent Institute, 1997.

This video employs a unique format: there are not adults-or even adult voices-to be seen or heard. The script attempts to distill what children would teach us about what it feels like to be moved; and how their behavior changes as a result, including their emotional availability for new attachments. The film also provides suggestions on how these situations could be better handled. (16 minutes)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adoption:

Adoption is a service provided for children who cannot be reared by their birth parents and who need and can benefit from new and permanent family ties established through legal adoption.

Adoption Exchange:

A recruitment and referral agency, which helps social workers, find adoptive families for special needs children. The exchange does not place children.

Adoption Assistance Program (Subsidy):

Financial, medical, or social service assistance provided to the adopting parents to provide for the needs of an eligible special needs child.

Consent to Adopt:

A Consent to Adopt is a legal document the birth parents sign which releases all of their parental rights to the child to the specific adoptive parents they have selected. It cannot be signed until a minimum of 72 hours has elapsed from the time of a child's birth. Once signed and properly witnessed and notarized, it cannot be revoked by the birth parent. Nevada law requires that Consents to Adopt be witnessed by a social worker employed by a licensed child placing agency, or an agency which provides child welfare services, unless one of the adoptive parents is related to the child within the third degree of consanguinity.

Finalization:

The process in district court, in which an adoption is recognized by the law as final, and the adopted child is considered in the same relationship to you as though he/she were born to you. In Nevada, the child must have resided in the adoptive home for a minimum of six months before finalization can take place.

Foster Care:

Temporary care for children by families who are licensed by the Division of Child and Family Services or other public child welfare agency, which provides child welfare, services.

Home study:

This is a written report completed by a social worker, after compiling the information contained in your application, personal references, medical and law enforcement reports, individual and/or group interviews, and required home visits. During this process the worker evaluates the family motivation for adoption, expectations, parenting skills, ability to support a child, etc. An approved home study does not guarantee placement of a child.

Independent/Private Adoption:

An adoption arranged directly between birth parents and adoptive parents. Also known as specific adoption.

International/Intercountry Adoption:

International adoption, also known as intercountry or foreign adoption, involves the legal adoption of a child from a country other than the United States by an American citizen, *or* the adoption of a child from the United States by a resident of a foreign country.

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC):

The ICPC is a formal agreement between states to facilitate and regulate the placement of children into or from another state; including adoptive placements.

Legal risk placement:

Adoptive placement of children who are not yet legally free for adoption, i.e., the parental rights of one or both parents have not yet been terminated or relinquished.

Life book:

Life books are a collections of drawings, report cards, pictures, etc., that tells the story of the life of a child. They generally include a narrative describing the child's history. The process of compiling a life book helps the child establish a better sense of self and identity and is especially important for children being adopted.

Non-identifying information:

Information about the child such as birth date, birthplace, hospital, birth weight/length, medical/psychological history of the child, whether or not the child has siblings, their sex and age at the time of adoptive placement. It also includes information on the birth parents, such as their age at time of the adoption, ethnic background, marital status, height, weight, eye and hair coloring, religion, and complete medical and psychological background, without revealing the identity of the birth parents.

Parent support group:

A group of concerned adults and adoptive families who come together for the common purpose of promoting adoptions, and supporting each other and their children through education, information, and social gatherings.

Relinquishment:

Refers to a legal process through which a birth or legal parent voluntarily surrenders their parental rights with the intent that the child will be adopted. Relinquishment in Nevada can only be accepted by a public child welfare agency or a licensed child placing (adoption) agency.

Social Summary/Social History:

Refers to a cumulative document in which all information regarding a child's life is maintained, to be shared with appropriate caregivers to ensure continuity of care. This information includes all known family history (including hereditary problems or conditions), in addition to the child's personality, temperament, habits and the current status of the child's physical and emotional health, strengths and needs.

Special Needs Child:

Means a child for whom placement with an adoptive family is made more difficult because of the child's age, race, number of siblings, or because the child suffers from a severe or chronic medical, physical, mental or emotional condition. Generally, a child over the age of five years, a member of a sibling group who need to be placed together, a member of a minority ethnic group, and/or children of any age who

experience behavioral, developmental, physical or medical challenges are considered special needs.

Termination of parental rights:

Means an involuntary Court action that permanently ends the legal parent-child relationship, rendering the child legally free for adoption.

Third degree of consanguinity:

Child's relatives- limited to parent, grandparent, brother, sister, great-grandparent, aunt, uncle, niece, and nephew.