

Your civil rights

Individuals eligible for or receiving services or benefiting from programs funded by or through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services are protected against unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, disability, age, gender, and national origin.

To learn more, ask your worker for the JFS 08000 – Your Rights. If you feel you have been discriminated against, contact:

The Ohio Department of Job & Family Services
Office of Employee & Business Services
Bureau of Civil Rights
30 E. Broad Street, 37th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215
Telephone: (614) 644-2703
Toll free: 1-866-227-6353
TTY hearing impaired: 1-866-221-6700
Fax: (614) 752-6381

All forms mentioned in this publication are available online at
<http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/inter.asp>

Ted Strickland, Governor
State of Ohio

Helen Jones-Kelley, Director
Ohio Department of Job & Family Services

Office of Communications
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Equal Opportunity Employer & Service Provider

FOR BIRTH PARENTS



FOR THOSE WHO ARE THINKING ABOUT MAKING AN ADOPTION PLAN

As a birth parent, you are a very special and important person. You can decide the path for your own life and the life of another person, your child.



The information in this brochure will help you to decide what is best for you and your child.

Your Rights

Placing a child for adoption is permanent and cannot be changed. Before you make this important decision, you must talk to an assessor. An assessor is a person who has been specially trained. An assessor can be a social worker, counselor, or other adoption professional. He or she may work for either an adoption agency or the probate court. If you are not sure that the person is a certified assessor, ask to see the JFS 01680 Verification of Assessor Qualifications.

You must talk with the assessor at least once before you sign any adoption paperwork. He or she will give you complete information about services and options you may have. The assessor can tell you about:

- Parenting your child yourself
- Placing your child with a relative, temporarily or permanently
- Placing your child with a friend or non-relative, temporarily or permanently
- Guardianship and foster care options
- State and federal laws on adoption, including the Indian Child Welfare Act and Multi-Ethnic Placement Act/Inter-Ethnic Placement Act amendments
- Making an adoption plan

An adoption plan means placing your child for adoption. You may place your child with a relative, friend or someone known to an adoption agency or facilitator. An adoption facilitator is an attorney, minister, doctor, or other individual who gives information about adoption.

An assessor should tell you about community resources and other information, such as:

- Counseling
- Birth parent support groups
- Financial help, both state and federal
- Housing services
- Employment services
- Child care
- Health care
- Nutrition services
- Legal services

You can also call the Help-Me-Grow Hotline, 1-800-755-GROW, Ohio's family support telephone line for more information.

Ohio law says if you place your child for adoption:

- You must wait at least 72 hours after your child is born before you can sign the forms to voluntarily end your rights as a parent.
- An assessor must give you the information identified in this brochure about services and options at least 72 hours before you sign the forms.

If you want to talk to a lawyer before signing any forms, your local bar association can refer you to a lawyer. You cannot have the same lawyer as the adoptive parents. If you cannot afford a lawyer, you can ask your county probate court to choose one to represent you in the adoption. The court can choose one to represent your child's best interests.

For additional information on adoption issues, ask your worker for a copy of the Ohio Adoption Guidebook, JFS 01675.

The JFS 01675 is also available online at <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/inter.asp> or <http://www.ohio.gov/oapl/publications>.

Types of adoption

Adoptions may be open or confidential. You can choose what kind of adoption plan you want to make.

You have the right to decide what information to share with your child and the adoptive family. You will complete forms to release or not release information. You may choose to release only information that does not identify you, such as social and medical history, but not your name, address, or phone number.

You may decide to choose a more open adoption for you and your child. There are many types of open adoptions, from a one-time meeting or exchange of pictures to ongoing direct or indirect contact.

You may want a type of open adoption for your child not offered by your current agency or facilitator. If so, they may refer you to an agency that is better able to meet your wishes.

The law clearly says you have a right to set up an open adoption with the adoptive family. However, any open relationship, written or verbal, is strictly voluntary. This means that you or the adoptive family can change your minds later and decide to stop any contact. Written agreements between birth parents and adoptive parents are "good faith" agreements meant to meet the best interests of the child.

Open adoption arrangements are not shared parenting arrangements. The adoptive family holds all legal rights and responsibilities for the child. The adoptive family has the right to temporarily or permanently change or stop contact if the family feels it is in the child's best interest.

Adoption Plan

If you decide an adoption plan is best for you and your child, write down or tell the assessor everything you want the child to know about you and his or her family. Make sure you give a complete family health history so your child can get good care now and in the future.

Most adopted children will want to learn more about their birth family as they grow up. Please give as much information as possible to help answer your child's questions. Your adoption assessor will also tell you how you can leave more information for your child later.

You may have the option to review descriptions of the potential adoptive families, depending on the policy of the agency you work with. When possible, the agency may try to place your child with the family that you choose.

Sometimes it may not be possible to place your child with the family you choose. Agencies that receive federal money may not consider the request of a birth parent to place a child into a family based on race, color or national origin. The family may not agree to the placement or it may not appear to be the best place for the child. If this happens, you may be able to choose another family.

Other things to know

Ask for copies of any forms you sign. It is your right to have these forms. Be sure to save them.

Once a child is adopted, his or her birth certificate is changed and the original is sealed. Many birth parents who make an adoption plan for their child choose to get a copy of the child's birth certificate before it is changed.

Birth certificates are available from the Ohio Department of Health (614-466-1497).

Adoption is permanent and final. Talk to your adoption assessor and ask what services are available to you, such as counseling or support groups. Many birth parents have found such services to be very helpful. You may also find out about available services by contacting public or private agencies in your area.

