

Contact between birth parents and adoptive parents

Some birth parents choose to meet the adoptive parents and to continue to have once or twice yearly contact with the child and his/her adoptive parents. Written information and photographs are usually provided by the adoptive parents to the birth parents at least annually. Research indicates that this is very important for the adopted child. Contact arrangements and the regular provision of information can, if agreeable to both parties, be included as conditions of the adoption order made in the ACT Supreme Court.

When is identifying information available?

Identifying information about an adoption is available, on application from the adopted person, his/her birth parents, adoptive parents or descendants, after the adopted person reaches 18 years of age.



local adoption

information for applicants



More information?

Contact the Adoptions and Permanent Care Unit

phone: 6207 1335

fax: 6207 8888

email: adoptions@act.gov.au

www.dhcs.act.gov.au



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Adoption is the process by which a child ceases to be a member of one family and becomes, legally and permanently, a member of a new family. The ACT Adoptions Unit is responsible for adoption arrangements for children whose birth parents make a plan of adoption in the ACT. The Unit is part of the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support within the ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services. Its functions are determined by the *ACT Adoptions Act 1993*.

Why are children placed for adoption?

It is now less common for the birth parents of healthy newborn babies to make an adoption plan just because they are young or unmarried. No assumptions can be made about why or how a child has been placed for adoption. Birth parents who are considering an adoption plan may be influenced by factors in their lives such as relationship breakdown, mental or physical illness, addictions, or they may simply feel unable or unwilling to parent their child.

The adoption process

It is not possible for a woman to sign consent to the adoption of her child until the baby is at least eight days old (the parent must also have had a copy of the consent form for at least fourteen days before giving consent). There is a period of 30 days during which the mother may change her mind and revoke her consent.

Babies are cared for by pre-adoptive foster mothers until all adoption consents become legally valid.

If there is a father who meets the criteria for presumption of paternity under *The Parentage Act 2004*, then his consent to the adoption is also required. Any other legal guardian of a child is also required to give consent.

For people considering an application for adoption

People considering an application to adopt a child are encouraged to seek as much information as possible about the unique challenges, demands and rewards of adoptive parenthood. In line with adoption legislation and national guidelines, there are a number of eligibility criteria that apply to prospective adoptive parents.

Applications for assessment of prospective adoptive parents are only accepted after people have attended an introductory interview with an adoption social worker and an education seminar.

Whenever an adoptive family is required for a child, all approved adoptive parents are considered and the child is placed with the family who is considered to best meet the needs of the child and any requirements of the birth parents.

There is no guarantee that approved adoptive parents will have a child placed with them and no way of estimating how long they will wait for a placement of a child.

Involvement of birth parents in placing a child for adoption

When birth parents make an adoption plan for their child, they may choose to be actively involved in the process of selecting adoptive parents. They may require that the child be placed with adoptive parents of a specified religious, ethnic or racial background and marital status, and may specify that adoptive parents meet specific criteria in relation to their attitudes or lifestyle.

Every effort is made to ensure that adoptive parents meet these identified criteria. Birth parents can also be provided with non-identifying information about selected approved adoptive parents, so that they can choose who best fits their criteria for adopting their child.

