How to Contact Adoptive Families and Start Your Adoption Journey

Deciding to place a child for adoption is a deeply personal choice. For many birth parents, the next question is often about how to contact adoptive families in a way that feels safe, respectful, and aligned with their hopes for the child's future. This step can feel overwhelming, but understanding the process can bring clarity and confidence.

The path from considering adoption to finalization involves several stages, and each one offers opportunities to ask questions, set boundaries, and build connections. Whether you are early in your thinking or ready to move forward, knowing what to expect helps you make informed decisions.

Understanding the Types of Adoption

Before reaching out to potential adoptive families, it helps to understand the main types of adoption. Each type shapes how much contact you might have with the family and the child over time.

Open adoption allows ongoing communication between birth parents, adoptive parents, and sometimes the child. This can include letters, photos, phone calls, or in-person visits. Many birth parents choose this option because it maintains a relationship and lets them see their child grow up.

Closed adoption means no identifying information is shared, and there is no contact after placement. This was more common in the past, but today it is less frequent. Some birth parents prefer it for privacy or emotional reasons.

Infant adoption typically involves placing a newborn with an adoptive family shortly after birth. The process moves quickly, and the matching stage is often guided by agencies or attorneys. In contrast, **foster care adoption** usually involves children who are already in state custody, and the timeline and legal steps differ significantly.

Knowing these distinctions helps you decide what kind of relationship you want before you contact adoptive families.

The Role of Agencies and Professionals

Most birth parents work with professionals to navigate the adoption process. These experts provide guidance, counseling, and legal support. They also help you review and select adoptive families.

Chattanooga adoption agencies and national organizations like **American Adoptions**, **Bethany Christian Services**, and **Lifetime Adoption** offer services that include matching, counseling, and home studies. An **adoption social worker** conducts the **adoption home study**, which evaluates prospective adoptive parents and prepares them for placement. This study is a legal requirement in most states, including Tennessee.



An **adoption attorney** handles the legal side of things, including consent forms and **adoption finalization**. The attorney ensures that all legal steps are followed and that your rights are protected. Some agencies provide **birth parent counseling** at no cost, which can be invaluable as you work through your emotions and decisions.

If you are considering adopting a child from the foster care system, the **Tennessee Department of Children's Services** oversees that process. The agency works with families who are approved for **foster care adoption** and coordinates with local courts and social workers.

How to Contact Adoptive Families

The phrase "contact adoptive families" might sound like a simple task, but it involves thoughtful steps. You are not just finding a family; you are finding the right fit for your child and for you.

Most agencies and adoption professionals maintain **adoption profiles** of waiting families. These profiles include photos, letters, and details about their lifestyle, values, and home environment. You can review these profiles and indicate which families interest you. Some agencies let you meet the family before placement, either in person or through video calls.

When you are ready to contact adoptive families, your social worker or agency coordinator usually facilitates the first communication. This keeps things structured and ensures that everyone's privacy is respected. You can ask questions about the family's parenting philosophy, their support system, their openness to contact, and their experience with adoption.

It is normal to feel nervous. Many birth parents worry about being judged or about choosing the wrong family. Working with a professional helps because they have seen many matches and can offer perspective. They also help you set boundaries around contact frequency and type.

If you are working independently or through an attorney, you can still request profiles and set up meetings. The **National Council For Adoption** and **AdoptUSKids** provide resources and directories that can help you find families and agencies. These organizations also offer educational materials about the adoption process.

What to Look for in a Family

When you review profiles, think about what matters most to you. Some birth parents want a family that shares their cultural or religious background. Others prioritize education, location, or the presence of siblings. Still others look for families who are open to continued contact after placement.

Consider asking about the family's experience with **adoption matching**. Some families have already completed a home study and are ready to adopt. Others are newer to the process. Ask about their support network, their approach to parenting, and how they plan to talk with the child about adoption.

It can help to write down your questions before you contact adoptive families. That way you do not forget anything important in the moment. Your social worker can also review the questions and add suggestions.

Financial and Legal Considerations

Adoption involves legal and sometimes financial aspects that vary by state. In Tennessee, birth parents can receive assistance for medical expenses, counseling, and living costs during pregnancy. These are allowed by law and are not considered payment for adoption.

Adoptive parents may be eligible for an **adoption tax credit** on their federal taxes. This credit helps offset some of the costs associated with adoption, such as agency fees, legal fees, and travel expenses. Birth parents do not typically claim this credit, but it is good to know that adoptive families have some financial support.

An **adoption attorney** can explain the legal rights of birth parents in your state. You have the right to change your mind before consent is signed, and you have the right to choose the family. You also have the right to revoke consent within a certain timeframe after signing, depending on state law. Make sure you understand these timelines before finalization.

Emotional Support Along the Way

Adoption is an emotional journey. It involves grief, hope, and love all at once. You do not have to go through it alone.

Adoption support groups connect you with other birth parents who have walked the same path. These groups offer a space to share stories, ask questions, and receive encouragement. Some are run by agencies, while others are independent. Online groups also exist if you prefer anonymity.



Birth parent counseling is available through many agencies and can continue after placement. Professional counselors understand the complexities of adoption and can help you process your feelings. They do not push you toward any particular decision; they support whatever choice is right for you.

Some birth parents find comfort in knowing they can still be part of their child's life, even if they are not raising them. Others prefer to close that chapter and move forward. Both choices are valid. What matters is that you have the information and support to make the decision that fits your life.

Practical Steps to Get Started

If you are ready to take the next step, here is a simple list to guide you:

- Research agencies and professionals in your area, such as Chattanooga adoption agencies or national networks like American Adoptions and Bethany Christian Services.
- Schedule a consultation to learn about their services, costs, and approach to matching.
- Ask about birth parent counseling and whether it is available before and after placement.
- Review adoption profiles to get a sense of the families waiting to adopt.
- Talk to an adoption attorney or social worker about your legal rights and the consent process in Tennessee.

Once you have this foundation, you can contact adoptive families with confidence. Remember that you are in control. You set the pace. You ask the questions. You choose the family.

The phrase "contact adoptive families" may sound like a small step, but it is actually a powerful one. It represents your active role in shaping your child's future. It is a step toward a plan that honors your love and your decision.

Final Thoughts

Every adoption story is different. Some birth parents stay in close touch with the adoptive family for years. Others choose a closed adoption and move on. There is no single right way to do this. The right way is the one that feels honest and sustainable for you.

If you are considering adoption in Tennessee, you have access to experienced professionals, supportive agencies, and a legal framework that protects your rights. Take your time. Ask for help. And when you are ready, you will know how to contact adoptive families in a way that reflects your values and your hopes for your child.