

I'm Ready to Adopt! How Do I Choose an Adoption Agency?

When you are ready to start the process of adopting a child or youth, the first step is to choose an agency. You will want to work with an agency licensed by the state that has compassionate, patient, efficient, and available staff when needed. But what are the other characteristics you might want, and what questions should you ask? It's a good idea to call a few different adoption agencies to see which one is the best fit for you and your family. Following are a few tips to get you started.

Researching an Agency

We recommend gathering as much information as possible about adoption in Wisconsin, adoption agencies, and state requirements. Ask questions like:

- Is the agency licensed by the state?
- Is the license current?
- When was the licensing board's last visit to the agency?
- Are there any current or unresolved complaints against the agency?
- If you are considering an out-of-state adoption, you should ask if the agency conducts out-of-state adoption.

You can find these answers by contacting the Department of Children & Families at 608-267-3905.

Networking and Support Groups

You might also try networking with adoptive

parent support groups to learn about the agencies they went to and ask for recommendations. (For a list of support groups, check out the resource section at the end of this tip sheet.)

Support groups and adoption classes are also helpful throughout the adoption process because agency staff and websites can only provide so much information. Real learning comes when you combine that information with forming relationships with others on the same journey.

Elizabeth G., a Wisconsin adoptive parent, says, "In the course of our adoption process,



we went through 13 weeks of preparation classes; something we initially were not looking forward to but turned out to be wonderful."

She says, "We have kept in touch with many families and have gatherings

regularly. We have developed an unbelievable support network that is invaluable to our family and the children. Among us, we've adopted eight children, with several more pending."

Once you've narrowed down the search for an adoption agency, set up an introductory meeting so you can ask more detailed questions.

Questions to Ask Agencies

It is essential to be comfortable asking many

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questions throughout this process. Fundamental questions include those about age, marital status, income, health, religious affiliations, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Beyond these basics, you might also ask:

- Can you give us an itemized list of costs and fees for the entire process?
- Are you affiliated with any other adoption groups or religious organizations? (This may be important to some, while it may not be a priority to others.)
- Does the agency work with single individuals seeking to adopt?
- Does the agency offer a free orientation?
- What training does the agency provide?
- What pre-adoptive and post-adoption services does the agency provide?
- What types of services are offered to birth parents?
- What kinds of support are offered to families during the adoption process?
- What is the average wait time for a referral?
- What are the agency's adoption matching policies?
- Does the agency have an attorney on staff or a list of attorneys to help in the legal process of adoption?
- Does the agency have a stance or opinion about open adoption?
- If we are not approved, can we find out why? Is there an appeal process?

country if regulations change?

- How long have you placed children from each country we are considering?
- Are the international agencies you work with licensed in their own countries?
- How much does it cost to adopt from each program?
- Do the fees also include those to the international placing agency?
- Do the fees cover international processing, transportation, medical exams, document translation, visa, notarization, etc.?
- How do you help prepare adoptive parents for the adoption trip?
- Do you help make travel arrangements?
- Do bilingual representatives in each country assist with a child's referral? Will they be there to help us when we arrive?
- Do you provide financial assistance to the orphanages where you place children? Does the agency help the children in the country who are not adopted? Looking into the charities the agency is affiliated with can provide insight into how the agency operates.

Remind yourself to stay open-minded throughout the agency selection process. Asking questions to potential agencies increases the likelihood that the adoption process will be a positive experience.



International Adoption

There are specific questions you may want to ask when pursuing international adoption, such as:

- Do you have a program or work with a placing agency for the country we are considering?
- Do you have more than one foreign adoption program to choose from?
- Can we switch our application to another

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Resources

From the [Resource Library](#)

- *The Open Adoption Book: A Guide to Making Adoption Work for You*, by Bruce M. Rappaport, Ph.D.
- *Adopting On Your Own: The Complete Guide to Adopting as a Single Parent*, by Lee Veron
- [The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children: ICPC Basics for Caregivers](#)

Additional WiFCC Resources

- [Learn More About Adoption](#)
- [Family Resources & Support](#)

Additional Resources

- [AdoptiveFamilies.com](#)
- [Become an Adoptive Parent](#)
- [Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children \(ICPC\)](#)