

Adoption

Adoption is one of the most unselfish acts a birthparent can make for a child when the birthparents, for whatever reasons, are unable to raise the child themselves. Putting a child's welfare ahead of one's own feelings is a true act of love. It is never an easy decision. It is never without pain. Adoption means placing a child legally and permanently with a family who will raise the child as their own. In some cases the birthparent selects the adoptive parents. They may or may not actually meet depending upon their mutual wishes. In other cases, the birthparent(s) place the child with an agency who will take care of the arrangements of placing the child with a pre-approved family.

Although there are many children available for adoption, there are hurdles to jump in order to meet the requirements of the various agencies and legalities involved. In the United States, there are older children, International children, biracial and special needs children who are immediately available to adoptive families. There are fewer Caucasian infants (birth to one year old) in the United States waiting for adoption. Generally, the couple who considers adoption is generally dealing with infertility issues but desire parenthood. There is a grieving process associated with infertility issues. The adoption process is often long and filled with ups and downs. It may feel like an emotional roller coaster. As you can imagine, there are so many issues that can be involved in making this lifelong decision and commitment: Emotional, Spiritual, Physical, Legal and Financial.

Couples considering adoption need to be fully informed as to the options available for them as well as the requirements. It is important to be well informed as to the legal issues and requirements early in the decision making process. While most couples utilize adoption agencies to help them navigate the red tape, some couples take the path of private adoption.

When a child is placed with a potential adoptive couple there is a "waiting period" that allows the birthparents up to 30 days (depending upon the individual state laws) to reconsider. While legal guardianship is established with physical custody granted, the legal finalization of the adoption process, following the official home study, is usually completed at the end of one year.

While it seems as if the process leading up to the final adoption is a monumental ordeal, the adoptive parents quickly learn the trials and tribulations of being a parent. Since these issues are complex at best, remember that the Vanderbilt Work/Life Connections-EAP is a resource for faculty and staff offering assessment, brief counseling or referral information concerning community resources. For an appointment, call (615) 936-1327.

For more information on the subject, here are some Web links:

Parenting.com--Internet Adoption: A User's Guide
Children's Hope International Adoption Agency

Vanderbilt does not endorse any of these Web sites but makes them available for information purposes only for faculty and staff.