

THREE MAIN TYPES OF ADOPTION

The decision about the type of adoption and openness following placement of the child is typically decided collaboratively between the birth parents and adoptive parents. There is no right or wrong choice; this is a highly unique and individualized decision that should be made with the best interests of the child in mind.

Open Adoption: Every adoption of this type will be different, based on the type of relationship that the birth parents and the adoptive parents have agreed to. Both identifying and non-identifying information about the adoptive parents and the birth parents is shared with each other, which can include last names, addresses, and telephone numbers. The birth parents typically choose the adoptive parents and may meet in person.

In some open adoptions, the birth parent and the adoptive family know each other and have ongoing communication about the child. If the parents on both sides agree, the adoptive parents may even be allowed to be present for the delivery of the child, thus allowing them to vicariously share in the birthing process.

Neither the birth parents nor the adoptive parents are forced to participate in an open adoption if that is not what they are comfortable with. Although there is some disagreement on the subject, it is suggested that the child, and thus the adoptive parents that will be raising the child, are the primary beneficiaries of some of the most significant benefits that can result from an open adoption.

Semi-Open Adoptions: A form of adoption that is intentionally designed to be a combination of a more traditional closed adoption and a more progressive open adoption, with the emphasis being on the "privacy" of all parties, rather than on "confidentiality." The birth parents typically choose the adoptive parents and may meet in person before the birth of the child or at time of delivery but not typically following placement.

Direct communication after the adoption is more limited, in the fashion that is agreed by the parties to be beneficial for everyone. Last names, addresses, and telephone numbers are usually not exchanged, while the sharing of photographs or other information for an agreed frequency and duration is common.

All communication takes place through a third party, which is usually an adoption agency, an adoption attorney or a designated intermediary.

Closed Adoptions: This is the most traditional type of adoption that is still used today, but is declining in popularity as the focus in the relationships between adoptive parents and birth parents is shifting from the lack of information and total confidentiality, to shared information and privacy. The birth parents do not choose the adoptive family.

In these adoptions, the birth family and the adoptive family do not share any identifying information about themselves, and do not communicate with each other, either before or after the placement of the child.

The adoptive family will, however, receive non-identifying health and other background information about the child and the birth family before the placement takes place.

The birth parents may also receive non-identifying information about the adoptive parents. The adoption files will be sealed after the adoption, and typically are never made available to the adopted child.