



THE CRADLE

ADOPTION HANDBOOK

1.800.272.3534 | 24-HR SUPPORT

ADOPTION LAW of Illinois

Since the adoption process is not governed by any single set of national laws and guidelines, it is best to work with an agency that knows the laws of your state and can help you navigate them.

Here are some of the aspects of Illinois adoption law:

- Birthmothers **cannot sign the legal paperwork** consenting to an adoption **prior to 72 hours after the baby's birth**. They may, however, take longer than 72 hours to make this decision if they choose.
 - Anyone considering adoption for their child has the right to refuse to sign a "final and irrevocable" consent for adoption if they have any hesitation or doubt about their decision.
 - Birthfathers may sign the legal consent to adoption prior to the baby's birth, but it does not become valid until 72 hours after the birth. For more information on biological fathers' rights, call the Illinois Putative Father Registry at 1.800.420.2574.
 - A new mom considering adoption for her baby has the **same legal rights as any other mother**: the right to **privacy**; the right to **name** the baby; the right to choose **circumcision** for a male baby, as well as **make decisions on any other medical procedure**. She also has the right to make her own decision without undue pressure from others.
 - The decision to relinquish parental rights and consent to an adoption is **final and irrevocable** when signed. Birthparents cannot regain their parental rights to the child unless their consent was obtained by fraud or duress. Fraud involves intentional deception about a significant fact. Duress exists when a person is prevented from exercising his or her free will.
- A minor does not need his or her parents' permission to sign a consent to adoption.
 - A final order of adoption is granted by the court six months after the baby's placement into an adoptive home, at which time a new birth certificate is issued with the adoptive parents' names. This period is for evaluation of the adoptive family and is not a time that the birthparents can use to change their minds and request that the baby be returned.
 - Anyone considering adoption for their child has the right to terminate their relationship with an adoption resource at any time for any reason without consequences, financial or otherwise.
 - Anyone considering placing a child for adoption has the right to independent legal counsel. If the adoption resource is an attorney, they should ask if the attorney is representing the adoptive parents. If so, the birthparents have the right to request their own legal representation at no cost to themselves.
 - Any entity engaging in adoption services for compensation in Illinois must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and of not-for-profit status.
 - Adoption services are further defined as: "arranging for the placement of a child, identifying a child for adoption, matching adoptive parents with biological parents, arranging or facilitating an adoption, taking or acknowledging consents, performing background studies on children or adoptive parents, making determinations of the best interests of a child and appropriateness of adoptive placements for children."
(IL Adoption Reform Act effective 8/14/2005)

Questions or complaints about any adoption resource should be directed to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, 1.800.722.9124.

OPEN ADOPTION

Most domestic adoptions in the US today involve some form of interaction between the birth and adoptive parents. At The Cradle, birthparents can select the adoptive parents for their child from a pool of pre-screened candidates. The birth and adoptive families may meet and can even arrange to stay in contact after placement of the child. This is called open adoption.

The Cradle has been practicing open adoptions since the mid-1990's. Our experience supports the research in the field that there are benefits to openness with all parties involved.



Benefits for the child:

- A clearer sense of identity – knowing where he or she came from
- Direct access to birthparents to know why they chose adoption
- Understanding they are loved by their birth family

Benefits for birthparents:

- Reassurance of knowing the child is safe and thriving
- Able to share the child's birth story with them directly
- Reassure the child that they are loved by their birth family

Benefits for adoptive parents:

- Being personally chosen to raise the child
- Greater ability to answer the child's questions about their birth family
- Ongoing access to child's medical and social background

It's important to know that there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to open adoption at The Cradle. Each adoption relationship will be unique, as it is developed by the individual birth and adoptive parents involved.

Open adoption relationships between birth and adoptive families are based on trust and mutual respect. In Illinois, open adoption relationships are not legally enforceable.

ADOPTION

Language

First introduced by Minneapolis social worker Marietta Spencer more than 20 years ago, positive adoption language is crafted to give the maximum respect, dignity, responsibility, and objectivity about the decisions made by both birthparents and adoptive parents in discussing the family planning decisions they have made for children who have been adopted. By using positive adoption language, we help abolish the old stereotype that adoption is second best.

Excerpted from "International Adoption Guidebook," Mary M. Strickert © 2004

Common Phrases:

"Give up a baby"

"Put a baby up for adoption"

"Real mother"

"Keep the baby"

Suggested Alternatives:

"Make an adoption plan"

"Choose adoption for a baby"

"Birthmother or Biological mother"

"Choose to parent the baby"

Discussion Points:

- What does the phrase "give up" or "give away" a baby imply about intent and/or care put into the decision a woman facing an unplanned pregnancy might make?
- How different does the phrase "make an adoption plan" sound?
- Do you know the origin of the phrase "put up for adoption"?
- Is it relevant today?
- What does labeling the biological mother the "real" mother imply about adoptive parents?
- What does the phrase "keep the baby" imply?
- Does the phrase "choose to parent" strike you differently?



FAQ's

Do birthparents need to travel to Evanston to learn more about adoption?

No. Counseling will be made convenient to the expectant or new parent considering adoption. Their Cradle counselor will come to meet them whenever and wherever is best for them.

How much will this cost?

The Cradle's decision-making counseling services are provided to expectant parents free of charge. The Cradle will pay reasonable medical and living expenses. Any assistance is given freely as a gift with no strings attached.

The baby is already born. Is it too late to call The Cradle?

No. A Cradle counselor can come right out to the hospital and discuss adoption with a patient. Because The Cradle has an on-site nursery, there isn't any rush to find parents and make a final decision so that the baby can be discharged. The baby can simply be discharged to The Cradle Nursery while we continue to counsel the birthparents.

Do parents of a minor need to give their permission?

No, minors do not need to obtain their parents' permission to place a child for adoption. However, in many cases we find that the adoption process can be less stressful if there are honest and open discussions with family regarding this decision. The Cradle can help teens plan how they will talk to their parents about their pregnancy and adoption.

Can a birthparent change their mind after placement?

Once the legal document that terminates parental rights is signed, the decision is final. That's why it is very important to make sure that this decision isn't rushed and that appropriate counseling is obtained prior to signing the legal paperwork.

Does the father of my baby have to be involved?

The Cradle can work with a woman, regardless of her relationship with the baby's father. At The Cradle, we encourage expectant fathers to take part in the decision-making process. If the father does not wish to be involved, his parental rights can be terminated through signing a legal document, or through termination in the courts.

What if a client does not want contact with the adoptive family? Can they arrange for a confidential adoption?

Yes, of course. If a birthparent does not want contact with their child after placement, their wishes will be honored. You should know that all Cradle adoptive families are prepared for an open adoption. If the birthparents decide later on that they would like contact with their child's family, The Cradle can always help them reconnect.

What kind of families adopt through The Cradle?

There is a wide variety of families that adopt. Some adopt because of infertility, some because they feel they want to give a child in need a stable home environment. All races, ethnicities and religions adopt. All Cradle families are thoroughly screened and prepared, so no matter which family you choose, your child will be part of a loving, stable home.

Do you have families for African American and biracial babies?

Yes.

What if my baby is born with medical problems or has been exposed to drugs and/or alcohol?

The Cradle is committed to finding a safe, loving home for every child in our care.

THE CRADLE

Renowned as one of the foremost adoption agencies in the country since opening in 1923, The Cradle has helped place more than 14,000 children into permanent, loving homes. We provide lifelong support for all who are touched by adoption: birthparents, adopted persons and adoptive parents.

The Staff

The Cradle is staffed with compassionate professionals. They understand that the decision to place a child is not an easy one, but can be the best choice in some circumstances. Our counselors never pressure their clients to choose one option or another. They simply help them explore what adoption would look like for them.

The Nursery

The Cradle is the only adoption agency in the country with an on-site nursery. It's a safe, neutral place for babies to stay while their birthparents continue their counseling. The nursery is also a haven for infants who may have special needs and take a bit longer to find a loving home.



Lifelong Support

The Cradle offers extensive post adoption resources and support to all those connected through adoption. From adoption search services to adoption counseling and consultation, non-identifying medical and social history to our mutual consent registry, each of these are designed to help with issues and questions that may arise after adoption.

Longevity

The Cradle is required by law to keep information about the birthparents and adoptive parents for 99 years. If birth and adoptive families lose touch, or need some assistance with the open adoption relationship, working with a well-established licensed agency is their best resource.

Support for Professionals

The Cradle's outreach staff offers a range of in-service workshops and printed materials to help professionals stay current with how adoption is conducted in the state of Illinois.

All of this is offered free of charge and can be conducted at a time and location that is convenient to you.

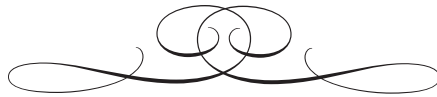
Call 847.475.5800 and ask to speak with one of our Outreach Managers, or email us at outreach@cradle.org.

Making a Referral to The Cradle

The Cradle is on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via a dedicated hotline set up to answer any questions or requests from birthparents, hospital staff or anyone interested in referring a client.

Simply call 1.800.272.3534 and someone will assist you.

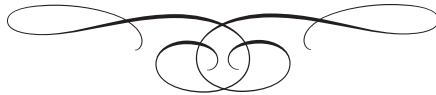
1.800.CRADLE4 WE ARE AVAILABLE 24/7 TO TAKE YOUR CALL



1.800.272.3534

ANY QUESTION ANY TIME

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