



# ADOPTION HANDBOOK



The  
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# ILLINOIS ADOPTION LAW

The adoption process is different in each state and it is best to work with an agency that is knowledgeable and can help you navigate your state's laws. Here are some of the key components of Illinois Adoption Law surrounding agency adoptions:

- **A mother may legally consent to a voluntary plan of adoption no earlier than 72 hours after the birth of her baby. The decision to relinquish parental rights is final and irrevocable once legal documents are signed.**
- A father may legally consent to adoption prior to the baby's birth, but the consent does not become valid until 72 hours after the baby's birth. **For more information on biological fathers' rights, call the Illinois Putative Father Registry at 1.866.737.3237 or visit [putativefather.org](http://putativefather.org).**
- A mother 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 the right to make decisions on any other medical procedures. She also has the right to make her own decision without undue pressure from others.
- A minor does not need his or her parents' permission.
- A final order of adoption is typically 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 birth parents can use to change their minds and request that the baby be returned.
- Anyone considering a voluntary plan of adoption for their child has the right to refuse to sign a final and irrevocable surrender for adoption if they have any hesitation or doubt about their decision.



- 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 request independent legal counsel. If an attorney is facilitating the adoption, the birth parent(s) should ask if the attorney is representing the adoptive parents.
- In the State of Illinois, an entity engaging in adoption services for compensation must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and be a registered 501c(3) nonprofit organization.
- 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 in the best interests of a child and appropriateness of adoptive placements for children *(IL Adoption Reform Act effective 8.14.2005)*.”

# OPEN ADOPTION

Most domestic adoptions in the USA involve some form of interaction between the birth and adoptive parents. At The Cradle, expectant parents considering adoption can select the prospective adoptive parent(s) for their child. The Cradle has waiting families who have completed the home study process. This process includes extensive background checks, completion of adoption education courses as well as routine visits with an adoption competent counselor. After a child is placed, the adoption counselor will have visits with the family. Typically, an adoption is finalized six months after placement.

The birth and adoptive families may meet and arrange to stay in contact through visits, text messages and/or emails after placement of a child(ren). The Cradle has been conducting open adoptions since the mid 1990's. Our experience supports the research in the field that there are benefits to openness for all parties involved.



*Openness looks different in every family. In the above photo, a Cradle family comes together with their child's birth mother to participate at our annual Cradle Family Picnic event.*

**Benefits for the Child:**

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

**Benefits for the Birth Parents:**

- 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 the Adoptive Parents**

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

Open adoption relationships between birth and adoptive families are based on trust and mutual respect. This relationship may change over time and in consideration of the child's needs.

# ADOPTION LANGUAGE

Positive adoption language is crafted to give the maximum respect, dignity, responsibility and objectivity about the decisions made by both birth and adoptive parents in discussing the family planning decisions they have made for the child(ren) who have been adopted. By using positive adoption language, we help to end the stereotype that adoption is second best.

## Common Phrases

Give up a baby  
Put a baby up for adoption  
Real mother  
Keep the baby

## Positive Adoption Language

Make an adoption plan  
Choose adoption for a baby  
Birth Mother or Biological Mother  
Choose to parent the baby



# THE CRADLE'S RESOURCES



Considering your role in the community, it is likely that you know or will work with someone touched by adoption or possibly considering the option of adoption. With this in mind, The Cradle offers robust resources to help community members be more confident in conversations and decisions around adoption. Below are a few of the opportunities we offer:

- **Free CE & CEU In-Service Trainings**

The Cradle offers free CE & CEU in-service training on a wide variety of topics that we can bring to your staff. Our team will develop a curriculum that meets your needs no matter the size of your group. To learn more or to schedule your in-service, call 847.322.7365 or email [outreach@cradle.org](mailto:outreach@cradle.org).

- **Our Children Initiative: An Education & Empowerment Series**

The Our Children Initiative focuses on complex issues around raising children in today's society. Titles in the Series have included *Raising Black Boys*, *The Color of Education*, and more. To learn additional information or to register for an upcoming Our Children program, call 847.475.5800 or email [cradle@cradle.org](mailto:cradle@cradle.org).

- **Adoption Learning Partners**

Take one of our courses or webinars online, learn more at [adoptionlearningpartners.org](http://adoptionlearningpartners.org).

- **Individual & Group Tours at The Cradle**

Visit The Cradle in person to understand more about adoption and see our Nursery area while you're here. To schedule a tour, call 847.475.5800.

# FAQ'S

## **Do expectant parents need to travel to Evanston for services?**

No, an expectant parent does not need to travel to Evanston for services. Their Cradle counselor will come to meet them wherever is best for them.

## **How much will this cost?**

The Cradle's services are provided to expectant parents free of charge. The Cradle can help with reasonable pregnancy related expenses as permitted by law, as well as providing help to locate resources in the community.

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

No, it is never too late to call The Cradle. 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 is time to talk things through and make a decision. The baby can be discharged to The Cradle Nursery while we continue to work with parents towards their final decision.

## **What if a baby has special medical needs?**

The Cradle is committed to finding a safe, loving family for each child in our care. We have extensive experience working with babies who have special medical needs. If our Nursery is unable to be a temporary resource for a baby due to acute care needs, The Cradle works with parents and the medical providers to create a care plan that most appropriately meets the needs of the baby.

## **Do parents of a minor need to give their permission for adoption?**

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 open and honest discussions with the family regarding this decision. The Cradle can help young birth parents plan how they will talk to their parents about their pregnancy and the options they are considering including adoption.

### **Can a birth parent 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 baby's father have to be involved?**

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. In some instances, a father's agreement is necessary to proceed with a plan for adoption.

### **What are the options for a birth parent who does not want an open adoption?**

Birth parents may not feel ready to have contact at the time of placement and their wishes will be honored. Should they decide at a later point that they would like to be in contact with their child, The Cradle's Center for Lifelong Adoption Support can help them reconnect with the adoptive family.

### **Who are the families that work with The Cradle to adopt a baby?**

Families of all races, ethnicities and religions adopt and all of our families are carefully screened and prepared for parenting through adoption. While reasons for adoption vary, all families share a desire to provide a child a stable and loving home.

### **Do you have families for African American and biracial babies?**

Yes, The Cradle has a diverse selection of families ready to adopt. Our Sayers Center for African American Adoption is dedicated to finding families for African American children.



# THE CRADLE



Renowned as one of the foremost child welfare and adoption agencies in the country since opening in 1923, The Cradle has helped to place nearly 16,000 newborns with families. We provide lifelong support for all who are touched by adoption including birth parents, adopted persons and adoptive parents.

## **The Staff**

The Cradle is staffed with compassionate professionals. They understand the decision to place a child is not an easy one. Our counselors never pressure their clients to choose one option over another. They simply explore what adoption could look like for them.

## **The Care of the Baby**

In The Cradle's Nursery, the baby will be cared for around-the-clock by licensed nurses. All newborn essentials such as clothing, diapers, food and more will be provided for the baby. Each baby also has their own bed, swing and other play toys during their stay in the Nursery. While a birth parent is considering their parenting options, they are able to visit their baby in the Nursery.

## **The Care of the Birth Parent**

The support for birth parents is continuous and lifelong at The Cradle. Our adoption competent counselors will provide expert support to clients while they are making their decision and continue to provide support and referrals to resources after a decision is made.

## **Lifelong Support**

The Cradle offers extensive post adoption resources and support to all those connected through adoption. Our counselors stay in contact with birth parents and are always available for support and help.

We also have post adoption counseling staff available for adoptive families in addition to classes, workshops and support groups.

Our services also include adoption search services, non-identifying medical and social history as well as mutual consent registries.

## **Longevity**

The Cradle is required by law to keep information about the adopted child 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 provides a range of in-service workshops as well as print and online materials to help professionals and the community. These services are offered free of charge and can be conducted at a time and location that is convenient to you. To learn more about the services that we can bring to your team, please contact us at 847.322.7365 or email [outreach@cradle.org](mailto:outreach@cradle.org).



### ***Making a Referral to The Cradle***

The Cradle is on call 24-hours a day, 7 days a week to answer any questions or requests from expectant parents, hospital staff or anyone interested in referring a client. **You may contact us by calling 1.800.272.3534 or emailing us at [helpline@cradle.org](mailto:helpline@cradle.org).**

## ***Our Mission***

*With our deep history in adoption as our foundation,  
The Cradle advances the well-being of children by  
compassionately delivering exceptional education,  
guidance and lifelong support to build,  
preserve and strengthen their families.*

## ***Our Values***

*Excellence, Integrity, Innovation,  
Accountability and Inclusiveness*



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