



## Adoption Services

# Local Adoption – Four Stage Process

**This document describes the application process for the adoption of local born children in South Australia in a 4-Stage Process**

The *Four Stage Process* to adopt a locally born child is conducted by Adoption Services, a unit of the of the Department for Child Protection

Each section of this document describes a stage of the process and shows what needs to be completed before an applicant can move on to the next stage. The information includes fees payable to the Department. These fees are adjusted on a yearly basis according to the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

The process described outlines the essential requirements. Sometimes changes may occur and the process can vary according to people's individual circumstances and the circumstances of children needing adoptive families. Further details about each step will be provided during the process.

**The time it takes for this process to move from stage 1 to stage 4 is difficult to predict. The need for adoptive families for children born in South Australia varies from time to time. In light of this, it is not possible to predict the timing or likelihood of a child being placed for adoption with you.**

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***If you have any questions as you read through this document, please feel free to contact us on 1800 512 355 or at [adoptions@sa.gov.au](mailto:adoptions@sa.gov.au)***

## The Four Stage Process:

### Stage 1 – Eligibility

***This stage involves you expressing your interest in adopting a local born child and providing information about yourselves. This information is required so that any potential difficulties can be identified as soon as possible. At this stage Adoption Services will make a decision about your eligibility to adopt a child under the SA Adoption legislation.***

**Information session** – These are free and are held depending on need. They must be attended prior to progressing to any other parts of Stage One. People who have not adopted before must attend an Information Session. At the Information Session you will be given a package of information in order to complete your 'Expression of Interest'.

#### **Expression of Interest**

- Signed and completed *Expression of Interest* lodged with Adoption Services (accompanied by fee & supporting documents as outlined in EOI form)
- Signed and completed *Statement of Understanding*
- Evidence of a Child-related Employment Screening for each of you **OR** Adoption Services will submit an application to the Department of Human Services on your behalf when we receive your Expression of Interest documents
- Signed and completed *Health Statement*
- Signed and completed '*Medical Report on Prospective Adoptive Parent*' form

**ADOPTION SERVICES will check all of the information you provide and follow up any Departmental records in relation to you.**

#### **Interview**

Once all the above documents and forms have been received and **we have the result of your police check from the Screening unit**, an interview will be arranged with an Adoption Services social worker to determine country eligibility, registration and suitability criteria. This is compulsory for both First and Second Applicants. For Second Applicants this interview will replace compulsory attendance at the Stage 2 Education Program.

All of the above must be completed, whether or not you have adopted before. All of this information is thoroughly reviewed and any potential difficulties will be discussed with you prior to Stage 2.

#### **FEES:**

- **\$615** if applying for the first time; **\$396** if you have previously adopted
- Other expenses at this stage will include cost of medical check
- **ADOPTION SERVICES FEES ARE PAYABLE AT THE START OF EACH STAGE AND ARE NOT REFUNDABLE**

***Once your Expression of Interest has been accepted and you are determined as eligible to adopt in South Australia, you can progress to Stage 2.***

## The Four Stage Process:

### Stage 2 – Workshop / Application / Registration

*The purpose of this stage is twofold:*

- For you to find out about adoption, the needs of children available for adoption, and to explore the personal and wider implications for you and your family, and consider them carefully.*
- For us to assess your suitability to adopt a child according to the requirements of the South Australian Legislation.*

#### Education Workshop

Applicants are required to participate in an education program run by Adoption Services. Due to the local adoption program being small, these workshops are held when we need to update our Register of prospective adoptive parents. You will be informed about these as they occur.

At the workshops you will receive a folder containing information about local adoption, and have the opportunity to meet other applicants and people with first-hand experience of adoption.

#### The Application

- As the need arises for more prospective adoptive parents for locally born children, you may be invited to apply.
- You will be provided with the required forms and documentation.
- On receipt of your application, Adoption Services will write to your nominated referees.
- Once we have received written comments from your referees, we can then proceed to assessment.

#### **STAGE TWO FEES:**

##### ***Education and Application:***

- First time applicants - **\$810**
- Subsequent applicants - **\$446**

##### ***Assessment:***

- First time applicants - **\$789**
- Subsequent applicants - **\$400**

## *The Four Stage Process:*

### **Stage 2 – Assessment**

#### **The Family Assessment**

1. A Social Worker will interview you both at home (together and separately) as well as interviewing any children of either or both of you, whether or not they live with you, and anyone else who lives in your home with you.
2. The assessing worker then prepares a written Family Assessment Report. The report is forwarded to you for confirmation that the facts contained in the report are correct.
3. The report and all other information in your file is considered by the Supervisor, Adoption Services. Other expert advice or consultation may also occur at this point. The Supervisor, Adoption Services makes a decision as to whether or not you are formally approved and registered as prospective adoptive parents.
  - If you are considered suitable to be registered as prospective adoptive parents, you will be advised of the decision in writing.
  - If you are not considered suitable to be registered as prospective adoptive parents, or there are other concerns regarding your application, you will be advised of this in writing and your rights to appeal the decision will be explained to you.

#### **Allocation Adoption Services worker**

Once you have been approved to adopt, you will receive notice in writing and you will be allocated a Social Worker who will be your contact point at Adoption Services to assist you through the process.

#### **Registration as prospective Adoptive Parents**

Registration as a prospective adoptive parent is valid for a period of 3 years. If no child is placed with you in this time you can apply to have your registration renewed. We will let you know at the time what you need to do and when. A review will consist of new Screening and Medical checks and having a Social Worker come to your home again to prepare an updated assessment report. The information is then reviewed and a decision made about renewing your registration.

*If you are registered as prospective adoptive parents you will move on to Stage 3.*

## **The Four Stage Process:**

### **Stage 3 – Allocation / Placement**

**This stage may be the most challenging for you. It is not possible to estimate how long this stage may take because very few children are relinquished for adoption in South Australia.**

- Once a parent has formally consented to the adoption of their child pursuant to Sec15 of the Adoption Act, consideration is given to placing the child in the best possible family for that particular child, taking into account the child's needs and the wishes and circumstances of the child's parents.
- The child's parents are usually involved in the decision about the placement of their child. This can include reading non-identifying profiles of possible adoptive parents.

#### ***Allocation***

- At allocation, the child's characteristics and needs are checked against the profiles of Prospective Adoptive Parents on the local register. Your suitability to be matched for a particular child will be determined through information contained in your Family Assessment Report and other documents obtained throughout Stages 1 and 2.
- If a child is matched with you, this is formally approved by the Supervisor, Adoption Services, as an allocation. You are then invited to an interview at Adoption Services to discuss the proposed match.
- Whilst you are required to update Adoption Services of any changes in your family circumstances throughout the adoption process, you will be formally asked at this point to confirm your circumstances or declare any changes that have occurred since your Family Assessment Report was written.
- A Social Worker from Adoption Services will then discuss the proposed allocation with you, including any particular or special needs the child may have.
- You will have the opportunity to consider the proposed placement of the child and accept or decline the match. You may ask for some time to consider the proposal and seek any further information you may need to help with your decision.

#### ***Meeting Birth Parents***

- If you choose to accept the allocation, arrangements will be made for you to meet the child and usually the child's parents and sometimes other family members (e.g. the child's grandparents or other relatives). Plans are then made for the child to be placed in your care.

#### ***Post adoption arrangements***

- It will be at this time that the social worker will discuss with you any post adoption plans about future contact between you and the child's birth family.

#### ***After the child is in your care and before the Court hearing***

- During this period, you and your child adjust to being a family together. The child remains under the guardianship of the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection until an adoption order is granted by the Youth Court.

#### ***At the time of placement you will receive***

- A letter and brochure about guardianship
- A letter for Centrelink to help obtain Centrelink benefits
- A letter for Medicare to obtain Medicare entitlements

## **The Four Stage Process:**

### **Stage 3 – Allocation / Placement (continued)**

**You and your child continue to adjust to being a family together. Post adoption contact plans will start at this stage.**

A Social Worker will be allocated as your contact person and will visit you and the child at your home. The Social Worker will prepare a report about how the child has settled into your family and this report will be submitted to Court as part of your application for an adoption order.

After the report has been finalised, and once you are ready, you can apply to the Youth Court for an adoption order.

As applicants to adopt the child, you will be required to make an application to the Youth Court. You will be provided with information about the Court process when you reach this stage.

Once the adoption order has been made, the child is legally part of your family.

#### **STAGE 3 FEES: \$393**

Other fees at this stage will include:

- South Australian Adoption Court fee
- Medical check for child

## The Four Stage Process:

### Stage 4 – After the Adoption Order

**Adoption is a life-long journey for your child and your family. After the adoption order is made, the child is legally your son or daughter.**

**The following points are relevant for the future of you and your child.**

#### **1. Birth Certificate**

If an adoption order has been made in the South Australian Youth Court, a South Australian Birth Registration is recorded at the Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages. A copy of this can be applied for a few weeks after the making of the adoption order.

On agreement between birth parents and adoptive parents, a birth certificate can be provided that has both sets of parents named. This is called an integrated birth certificate.

Under the provisions of the *Adoption Act, 1988* for adoptions which occur after 1989, once the child reaches the age of 18 years he or she can apply to the registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages for a copy of the original birth certificate, which contains identifying details of the birth parents.

Birth parents can also apply for information about the child's adoption, including identifying details such as the child's name after the adoption.

#### **2. Contact / Communication with child's birth family**

It is important for your child's future to foster and maintain connections between your child and significant people in his or her birth family and earlier life. This contact forms part of the Post Adoption Agreement. Post Adoption arrangements are made pursuant to section 26A of the *Adoption Act, 1988*, and must be made in writing. Copies of the written arrangements are provided to all parties to the adoption so that people can be clear into the future about what they have agreed to. Adoption Services assists with this process.

#### **3. Issues adoptive families may face**

All families experience difficulties from time to time. For adoptive families these issues may be different from those that arise for families where children are born to the parents. Should you feel that support or professional assistance might be of value, please do not hesitate to seek this out. Adoption Services can assist with resource and referral information or you can contact the Post Adoption Support Services (PASS) on 1300 364 277.

#### **4. Post Adoption issues about searching and making contact with birth family in the future**

It is very important for your child's and the family's well-being to understand about the child's background. Many adopted people wish to reconnect with their birth family as they grow older. Sometimes this can be very difficult or impossible and raises many issues. Adoption Services and PASS can help with these concerns.

#### **5. File storage/archiving/future access to file**

Adoption files are archived permanently by the South Australian Government. Future access to documents obtained during the course of your adoption application is governed by the *Adoption Act, 1988*. You, your child, and your child's birth parents and certain other eligible relatives and descendants, may apply for access to certain information from the adoption file.