The Four Stage Process to adopt a locally born child is conducted by Adoption Services, a unit 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.

If you have any questions as you read through this document, please feel free to contact us on 8463 3666 or at 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 regularly and must be attended prior to progressing to any other parts of Stage One. People who have not adopted before must attend this Information Session. At this 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 Screening and Licensing Branch 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:

- $575 if applying for the first time; $370 if you have previously adopted in SA
- 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 and to explore the personal and the 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
People who have not adopted before are required to attend 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 workshop 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 - $757
- Subsequent applicants - $417

Assessment:
- First time applicants - $737
- Subsequent applicants - $374
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 Assistant Director, Out-of-Home Care. Other expert advice or consultation may also occur at this point. The Assistant Director, OOHC 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 to be suitable to be registered as prospective adoptive parents, or there are other concerns regarding your application, you will be advised of this 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 child has been relinquished for adoption by his or her parents and the consents are valid, 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

- The child’s profile and yours are checked as well as your eligibility according to the South Australian Adoption Regulations to ensure the suitability of the match against the Family Assessment Report and other file documents.

- If a child is matched with you, this is formally approved as an allocation. You are invited to an interview at Adoption Services to discuss the proposed match.

- While you have been required to tell us of any changes in your family circumstances, you will be formally asked at this point to declare that your circumstances have not changed since your Family Assessment Report was written or what changes, if any, have occurred.

- 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 otherwise. You may ask for some time 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 (for examples, 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. Certain officers of the Department for Child Protection (through Adoption Services) are the legal guardians of the child until a legal order is made in the Adoptions Court, at which time that guardianship is extinguished and the child becomes your legal child.

At the time of placement you will receive

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The Four Stage Process:

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

You and your child adjust to being a family together. Post adoption contact plans may 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, you will be sent forms that are necessary for you to complete to make an application to the South Australia Adoptions Court for an order to adopt the child. These forms include:

- Application for adoption order
- Medical examination of the child
- Personal details

Once these forms have been returned to Adoption Services, your application is prepared and documents are forwarded to the Crown Solicitor for preparation for lodgement at the Court. You will be notified as soon as your application has been lodged in the Court and you will be advised to make a date with the Court for a hearing of your adoption application.

At the hearing, the Court will determine whether or not adoption is in the child's best interests. The Court may make an adoption order at that time.

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

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**STAGE 3 FEES: $368**

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 process. 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.

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 there are different issues that may arise than 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.