

The Road to Adoption¹

Although the process may vary slightly depending on where you live, the road to adoption normally includes an orientation session, an in-depth training program (MAPP) to help you determine if adoption is right for you and your family, a home study and a background check. This process can usually be completed within nine months. Once the process has been completed, you are ready to be matched with a child.

1. Call

If you already have an approved home study and a specific child in mind, you can call Florida's Adoption Information Center at 1-800-96ADOPT or 1-904-353-0679 to learn of the people in your area who will help you start the process of adoption.

If you do not have a home study, you can contact Florida's Adoption Information Center at 1-800-96ADOPT or 1-904-353-0679 to be referred to people in your area who will help you start the process of adoption.

2. Orientation

Orientation is a one to two hour presentation that will give you a chance to meet and talk with experienced adoptive parents and counselors who will provide an overview of the entire adoption process from start to finish.

3. Preparation Course (MAPP)

The Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting (MAPP) is a ten-week training and preparation course that adoptive parents are required to successfully complete. The training will give you the opportunity to assess yourself and your family and to explore and learn about adoption issues. These training sessions are usually scheduled at night or on weekends.

4. Home Study

The purpose of the home study is to make sure you can provide a child with a safe and secure home. During this time, local, state and federal background checks will be conducted on all adults living in the household. You will be required to supply references from your employer and school officials if you have children in school, and character references from individuals who have known you and your family.

A counselor will visit your home at least once to talk to you and other family members about adoption. The counselor will likely ask you about your reasons for wanting to adopt, your financial situation, and your parenting style and philosophy. If you are married, you may be asked about the strength of your marriage. It's important to be completely open and honest during these interviews and to remember that everyone involved is working together to ensure a successful adoption.

¹ Taken from the 'Adopt Florida!' website: http://www.adoptflorida.org/road_to_adoption.html

5. Approval

All of this information is gathered into a home study packet and sent for approval to an adoption specialist. You will be notified as soon as your application is approved.

6. Seeking the Right Match

You may continue to look at the available children on the Web and attend adoptive parent support group meetings. When your home study is completed, you may attend recruitment activities including the picnics or events when foster children who are available for adoption are in attendance. Notify your counselor when you are interested and need more information about a certain child or sibling group.

7. Match!

At last, you and your adoption counselor have identified a child who seems to be a perfect match. Now is the time to learn as much as you can about the child. You may talk to the child's foster parents or social worker to gain valuable insight into the child's personality and background. At the same time you are learning about the child, the counselor is sharing information about you and your family with the child. Some families prepare a photo album with pictures of their home, family members, family pets and the general neighborhood as a good way to introduce themselves to the child prior to an initial visit. When the child is comfortable, an initial short visit occurs. This initial visit is followed by longer and longer visits until the counselor, child and family agree that an overnight or extended visit can occur. There is no set timeframe for getting to know each other. The official placement in your home will occur when you, the child and the counselor determine that the child is ready.

8. Placement Supervision

After the child is placed in your home, a counselor must make monthly visits in order to assess the child's adjustment and to determine whether new or additional services are needed. The supervision period ends when the counselor provides "Consents to Adopt" to your attorney.

9. Finalization

Usually a child lives with the adoptive family for six months before the adoption is finalized. At the end of this period, your attorney will schedule a hearing before a judge. The adoption will be legalized at the hearing and the child will officially become part of your family.