



  
BETHANY.  
CHRISTIAN SERVICES

# ADOPTION 2012 GUIDE

# Table of contents

Welcome	3
Discover the Bethany Advantage	3
<b>DOMESTIC ADOPTION</b>	
Infant Adoption	6
Types of Infant Adoption	7
Older Child Adoption	8
Do I Qualify to Adopt?	8
Disrupted Adoption	9
Questions About Domestic Adoption	10
Fees For Domestic and International Adoption	12
<b>INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION</b>	
Bulgaria	14
China	15
Colombia	16
Ethiopia	17
Ghana	18
Haiti	19
Hong Kong	20
Lithuania	21
Philippines	22
Russia	23
South Korea	24
Taiwan	25
Uganda	26
Questions About International Adoption	27
Do I Qualify For International Adoption?	27
10 Steps to International Adoption	28
<b>ADOPTION DICTIONARY</b>	
Bethany's Adoption Dictionary	30
The Power of Words	34

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# Welcome

Thank you for your interest in adopting a child through Bethany Christian Services. As you explore the exciting world of adoption, we are here to help and support you at each step of the way.

For more than 65 years, Bethany has responded with compassion, integrity, and commitment to the needs of children and families. We are the largest adoption agency in the United States and



a prominent leader in social services worldwide. Bethany is a distinctly Christian agency whose mission is to unite vulnerable children with loving families.

Every child needs a loving family. Inspired by Jesus Christ's compassion, we seek to reach out to the most needy children to offer stable homes and forever families who will love them unconditionally.

We look forward to getting to know you better. May God bless you as you seek to build your family through adoption.

## Discover the Bethany advantage!

### WHY ADOPT THROUGH BETHANY?

With more than 65 years of experience, Bethany is a trusted adoption agency that has united more than 30,000 children with loving forever families. This testifies to our quality of service, integrity, and expertise. Bethany ministers to children in the United States and on five continents worldwide to deliver quality Christian care. Let us serve you through professionalized, expert, Christ-centered care!

#### **Providing Compassionate, Professional Service**

Bethany employs a nationwide network of experienced and educated adoption professionals to serve you. Bethany's network of offices allows you to benefit from the knowledge

and expertise of adoption professionals beyond your local office.

Bethany Christian Services meets the requirements of *Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption*, an international treaty that provides guidelines for the international adoption process with the goal of protecting children.

We are also accredited by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, which sets standards for responsible stewardship.

Our comprehensive, professional counseling services help assure both adoptive families and expectant parents that their adoption plan is the best decision for the child's future. We facilitate a plan that meets the desires of all concerned.

## Working Side by Side

We work side by side with you to help you along the way. Our parent orientation, education, and Home Study process give you confidence in your ability to parent an adopted child.

Bethany's staff recognize the importance of listening to your hopes and dreams as adoptive families.



When you travel internationally to adopt, Bethany's professional, in-country specialists will assist you. Our specialists speak the local language and English, and they are familiar with the local customs and adoption process. Their care and support will give you confidence when traveling to another country to adopt.

Our staff are available to you long after the adoption placement to provide post-adoption services such as counseling or referrals. They know the unique requirements of each international adoption program that Bethany offers. You'll have peace of mind knowing that our knowledgeable, dedicated staff are here to help you every step of the way.

## Connecting You

Our website, [www.bethany.org](http://www.bethany.org), gives families the opportunity to display their adoptive family profiles to thousands of online visitors, further enhancing our networking efforts. The website also provides comprehensive information about adopting a child internationally and connects you to a local Bethany office.

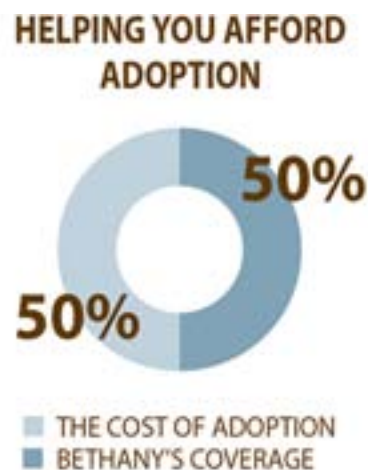
As well, Bethany offers online places for people to get in touch with others who share their experiences. Adoptive families, birthfamilies, foster families, and adoptees can **meet and talk** here, and birthparents and birthfamilies can **share experiences** in this discussion forum.

## Finding Financial Solutions

Gifts from Bethany's generous donors make it possible for us to cover 50% of the cost of an adoption. We will work with you to further reduce the costs through grants or loans. Federal and state tax credits are also available. We strive to help you overcome financial barriers so you can welcome a vulnerable waiting child into your home.

Bethany takes financial risks on your behalf. If a birthmother needs rent and medical care, Bethany pays those bills. If the birthmother decides to parent her child, we are not entitled to reimbursement. In a private adoption, you would incur these expenses and would not be reimbursed if the birthmother decided to parent.

More information about **financing adoption** is available on our website. Download a free *Financing Adoption Resource Guide* for further ideas.





# DOMESTIC ADOPTION

Today's adoption plans offer new opportunities for birthparents and adoptive parents to share their mutual love for a precious child. At Bethany, we recognize that every family's situation is unique. We will work with you to create an adoption plan that is in the best interests of all concerned.

# Domestic Adoption

Families adopt infants or young children for many reasons. Many families see adoption as a beautiful reflection of the way God loves all His children.

## INFANT ADOPTION

Would you like to welcome a newborn into your home? You can give a child a bright future filled with love.

Families adopt infants or young children for many reasons. Perhaps you feel called to provide a loving home to a child in need. Maybe you have struggled with infertility and want to grow your family through adoption. Many families see adoption as a beautiful reflection of the way God loves all His children.

Expectant parents make an adoption plan for their unborn child because they feel they are not able to parent at this time and that adoption is the best choice for their child. Bethany works with both adoptive and expectant parents to create an adoption plan that works best for everyone.



Each family's situation is unique. Today's adoption plans provide options to meet a variety of circumstances. Open adoption and semi-open adoption offer a relationship and a dimension of intimacy that arises when birthparents and adoptive parents share their mutual love for a child. Confidential adoptions place privacy at the center of the adoption arrangement, but do not prevent a child from needing to know his or her adoption story and the loving choice behind it.

The degree of openness is determined by the adoptive and birth families before placement. Some families are unsure about ongoing contact at first, but many adoptive parents discover that once they get to know the birthparents, they want to have a relationship for everyone's benefit.

In any intimate relationship, interactions can change over time. No two relationships are alike, and they can evolve and transform because of new circumstances. Every adoption plan has distinctive features, and the level of contact that works for your family may not work for another.

## TYPES OF INFANT ADOPTION

### OPEN ADOPTION

In an open adoption, children grow up knowing that they are loved by all of their family members: the parents who adopted them and the parents who gave them life. Relationships that are open or have some degree of openness seem to give adoptive



parents the best opportunity to answer their children's questions most effectively and to share their children's stories.

Parents and children involved in an open adoption communicate directly, without a third party. This plan allows both families to nurture their relationships as they naturally develop. Information is shared easily, questions are answered fully, and there is a greater understanding of the child's history. We have found that children thrive when they have honest and accurate information about their birth and adoption stories.

#### Common elements:

- The expectant parents meet prospective adoptive parents to confirm their selection.
- The birth and adoptive families fully disclose identifying information.
- There is usually ongoing contact during the pregnancy and birth as families build their relationship and develop trust with each other.
- After placement, there is direct contact between families in person or by telephone, e-mail, or letters.
- There is direct and ongoing contact between birth and adoptive families as the child grows up.

### SEMI-OPEN ADOPTION

The advantage of this arrangement is that both families have the opportunity to develop a relationship over time. A semi-open adoption gives everyone the freedom to communicate with the assistance of the agency. Levels of contact vary and are determined by the birth and adoptive families.

The greatest advantage of this plan lies in the sharing of information. A child's adoption story continues beyond birth and questions can be answered as they arise. This adoption plan can be very appropriate for birthparents who feel unable to have a more involved relationship.

#### Common elements:

- The expectant parents choose a family from written, non-identifying information and usually choose to meet the selected adoptive parents.
- Birthparents and adoptive parents usually know each other by their first names and may exchange full names.
- Post-placement meetings are arranged and may be supervised by a third party.
- Adoptive parents and birthparents share pictures and letters and may include gifts, videos, etc.
- An agency or third party mediates the contact between the parties before and after the birth.

### CONFIDENTIAL ADOPTION

In most states, total confidentiality is legally provided for birthparents and adoptive parents who desire this type of adoption plan. For a variety of reasons, some birthparents feel compelled to keep their pregnancy and adoption plan a secret and find that a closed adoption allows them the security that they believe they need.

In this form of adoption, there is no ongoing

exchange of information. However, there are exceptions such as a court-ordered exchange in the case of medical emergency. As an adoptive child grows, he or she may have questions that remain unanswered. Confidential adoptions make it difficult to gain needed information.

#### Common elements:

- Expectant parents may request that the agency choose the adoptive family.
- Birth and adoptive parents do not disclose identifying information.
- The adoptive family receives non-identifying information, including the child's medical and social history. There is not a planned, ongoing sharing of medical or social information.
- There is no contact between the adoptive family and the birthfamily after placement.
- Access to finding a birthparent is limited by law. The adult child seeking contact with a birthparent should first contact the state's central adoption registry or the placing agency.

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*More than anything, an older child who is waiting for adoption needs a loving, caring, permanent family.*

## OLDER CHILD ADOPTION

More than 400,000 children in the United States are living in foster care and more than 100,000 of them cannot return to their birthfamilies because of past abuse or neglect. These precious children are yearning for a lifelong family who will surround them with love and care.

Is there room in your heart and home to adopt an older child? Through Bethany, you can give a child who is living in foster care the gift of a forever family. Many of these children are waiting to be adopted as a group with brothers and sisters. They have experienced hurt and hardship in life. More than anything, they need a loving, caring, permanent family.

#### Who is an older child?

Older children are beyond the infancy stage (approximately two years of age and older) and live in foster care. Most children waiting for adoption are ages 8-15. They may be:

- Part of a sibling group.
- Dealing with past abuse or neglect.
- Mourning the loss of leaving their family.
- Experiencing emotional, behavioral, developmental, or medical challenges.

## DO I QUALIFY TO ADOPT?

At Bethany, we are committed to placing infants with forever families who are sincere and committed Christians, emotionally mature, healthy, financially stable, and possess the necessary qualities to nurture young lives. The well-being of the child is our primary concern. Full recognition is given to your needs and interests and to those of the birthparents. Historically, almost all of our infants have been placed with married couples who are generally between the ages of 28 and 43.

**Could your family be one where an older child could thrive?** We seek families that are stable, secure, loving, and nurturing. Bethany's goal is to find the best family to meet the child's needs.

# Disrupted adoption plan

There are times when an adoption plan does not materialize. Expectant parents may decide to parent a child themselves. When this happens, you may experience a profound loss, similar to a miscarriage or stillbirth.

Trust that God has a plan for your lives. Our hope and prayer is that as you walk this difficult path, you will feel God's presence and comfort.

## WHILE YOU GRIEVE

**Allow yourself to grieve.** Remember that everyone grieves in different ways.

**Express your feelings.** Expect to experience sadness, anger, guilt, denial, or rationalization.

**Talk to someone.** Find someone that you trust—a person who will just listen and support you through this difficult time.

**Don't blame yourself.** The pain that you feel is not because you made a bad choice, but because it did not work out as you had planned.

**Let others care for you.** Accept the help that is offered by family, friends, or your

church community. You don't have to go through this alone.

**Avoid a hasty decision.** Your emotions are running high, so don't decide right away that adoption is—or isn't—right for you.

**Keep special momentos.** This is an experience that is woven into the tapestry of your life. Tuck away reminders of this baby so that they are there for you when you are ready. You could take time to write a letter to the child or journal about this experience. You could plant a tree or make a garden stone as a memory, or plan a healing service with family and friends.

**Read God's Word** to help you through this time. The following are suggested scripture texts:

- Psalm 23
- Psalm 34:18
- Psalm 40:1-3
- Isaiah 40:29-31
- Isaiah 41:10
- Isaiah 55:9
- Romans 5:3-5
- Romans 8:28
- II Corinthians 4:18
- Philippians 4:6

“*For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

— Jeremiah 29:11-12 NIV



# Questions about adoption

Adoption is a wonderful journey. You will likely have many questions along the way. Bethany has been helping families adopt for more than 65 years, and we know that prospective parents often seek answers to the following questions. If you have other questions, please feel free to contact us.

## **How will Bethany prepare us for adoptive parenthood?**

We are here to support you at each step of your adoption journey. Bethany offers information meetings where you can hear from staff and talk with other prospective parents. As well, we have discussion blogs where you can network with other parents who have walked the same road. Although we cannot guarantee placement of a child in your home, you can have the confidence of knowing that many people have welcomed one or more children into their family through Bethany. As you prepare to adopt, our knowledgeable staff will offer counseling and guidance.

## **How can we apply to adopt?**

You can locate a Bethany office near you or contact us for information on how to apply. If you live in a state where Bethany has an office, please attend an information meeting or schedule an initial consultation. You can also request a free Adoption Information Packet to learn more about the process.

## **How will Bethany help us adopt?**

Bethany staff will help you to know what is expected along the way. As a first step, you will take part in a Home Study interview process. This includes interviews, a home visit, paperwork, and assessments that are required by State law.

## **Do we have the right kind of family for adoption?**

Adoptive families come in all shapes and sizes. Every family seeking to adopt a child must have a Home Study completed according to their state's laws. We seek loving families who are emotionally mature, stable, and nurturing. In all cases, we desire the best placement for the child in need. See Do I Qualify to Adopt? for more information.

## **Do we choose the child that we adopt?**

In infant adoption, the expectant parents usually select the adoptive family for their child. In the case of confidential adoptions, Bethany staff may select a family we believe is best suited for the child in need. We seek loving homes for each child we serve.

If you wish to adopt an older waiting child, many states have online photo listings.

## **How will expectant parents know that we want to adopt an infant?**

Bethany staff can help you create a family profile that explains your family using pictures, captions, and text. Your local Bethany office will share your profile with expectant parents. You can also choose to place your profile on Bethany's website for expectant parents to view. Sometimes expectant and adoptive parents find each other by word of

mouth or through networking. Bethany works cooperatively with pregnancy care centers, doctors, and hospitals to ensure that expectant parents know you are hoping to adopt.

### **Will we have ongoing contact with the expectant parents?**

Bethany works with both the expectant and adoptive parents to initiate a mutually agreed-upon relationship. This relationship includes the type of adoption and the degree of openness desired in your relationship. In today's adoptions, over 90% of infant adoptions within the U.S. have some form of openness. Often the birth and adoptive parents' relationship evolves over time, seeking what is in the child's best interest.



### **When does placement occur?**

The child may be placed in your home directly following birth or interim care. At times, interim care is provided for the infant while the birthparents make their final decision.

### **When will the adoption be finalized?**

Finalization of infant adoption occurs after a specified period of time. This varies from state to state but is usually at least several months. Your local Bethany office can provide you with information for your state.

### **When are adoption fees due?**

Your local Bethany office can give you details about the amount and timing of adoption fees. Download our free *Financing Adoption Resource Guide* for more information.

### **How will Bethany help us adjust to changes after adoption?**

Bethany is strongly committed to meeting your needs through our post-adoption services. For several months after the placement of the child in your home, you will meet periodically with a Bethany adoption specialist for required visits. We are always happy to help you when questions or concerns arise after an adoption. Feel free to contact our knowledgeable staff for support along your journey.



# Fees for Domestic and International Adoption

Adoption expenses vary, depending on whether you pursue a domestic infant, older child, or international adoption.

Older child adoptions are usually state-funded. Medical and financial subsidies are available until the child turns 18. See our free Financing Adoption Resource Guide for more information.

	<b>DOMESTIC INFANT ADOPTION</b>	<b>DOMESTIC OLDER CHILD ADOPTION</b>	<b>INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION</b>
Bethany's cost to deliver services	\$20,000 - \$30,000*	\$0 - \$25,000*	**
Adoptive families' cost	\$11,500 - \$27,500*	\$0-\$25,000*	\$15,000-\$40,000**
Federal Adoption Tax Credit	\$13,170 (2010)	\$13,170 (2010)	\$13,170 (2010)
State Adoption Tax Credit	\$0-\$5,000*	\$0-\$5,000*	\$0-\$5,000*
Employer/Military Adoption Benefits	\$0-\$10,000	\$0-\$10,000	\$0-\$10,000
Adoption Grants	\$0-\$4,000	\$0	\$0-\$4,000
Net Total Adoption Cost*** (range)	\$0-\$3,500	\$0	\$0-\$3,500
<b>Net Total Adoption Cost (average)</b>	<b>\$4,830</b>	<b>Qualified taxpayers receive up to \$13,170 in tax credits.</b>	<b>\$11,830</b>

\* Depending on state

\*\* Depending on country

\*\*\*Net Total Adoption Cost assumes qualifying for the federal adoption tax credit and not receiving any state adoption tax credits, employer adoption benefits, or adoption grants. For the most up-to-date adoption tax benefits for your specific situation, please consult a professional tax advisor.



# INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION

We are excited to support you as you seek to adopt internationally. Bethany currently offers adoption programs in 11 countries. Each one has specific requirements in addition to the requirements for a standard adoption. The following information will give you an idea of what is unique about each country's adoption programs. Please note that referral and travel times are subject to change during your adoption process. Your Bethany adoption specialist will provide detailed information about each of the countries we serve.



# Bulgaria

Bethany has been facilitating adoptions in Bulgaria since 1994. Children available for adoption range in age from 1-15 years of age. Most children will be over 4 years of age and will be boys. Preference is given to families who are open to adopting a child with special needs or who are interested in adopting a child over age 6. Sibling groups may also be available.

## REQUIREMENTS

**Family:** Adoptive parents must be a minimum of 25 years of age and at least 15 years older than the child. Parents should be married for a minimum of 1 year. There is no limit on the number of previous marriages or of children already in the home. Single women may apply to adopt from Bulgaria.

**Income:** Income must meet the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services requirements.

**Travel:** Two trips are required. Both parents must travel for the first trip. Each trip is approximately seven to nine days in length. A court hearing will take place in between the first and second trips. You must have a U.S. passport to travel to Bulgaria. While in Bulgaria, our partner organization will help with transportation and appointments related to your adoption.

## PROCESS

**1. Preliminary application:** After completing your Preliminary Application, the Bulgaria team will review it. Upon approval, your local Bethany office will contact you regarding next steps.

**2. Adoptive Home Study:** Four documented meetings are required for submission of a dossier to Bulgaria.

**3. Dossier:** Your dossier is translated when it arrives in Bulgaria. It will be submitted to the Bulgarian Ministry of Justice for review and to be placed on the registry waiting list.

**4. Referral/Travel:** The current time frames for referrals are 18-24 months or longer. Preference is given to families who are open to adopting a child with special needs or older than age 6. You can bring your child home approximately three to four months after referral.

**5. Post-Adoption Reports:** Your adoption specialist will complete six post-adoption visits and reports after your child is home. These will occur at the following times: arrival, three, six, 12, 18, and 24 months. Pictures accompany these reports.



# China

Bethany has facilitated adoptions in China since 1992. We work directly with the China Center for Adoption Affairs (CCAA) in Beijing. Most children live in orphanages and may have some developmental or institutionalized delays. Children are typically orphaned or abandoned shortly after birth. Generally, the children are 10-14 months at placement, and most are girls. Some children may also have special needs.

## REQUIREMENTS

**Family:** Parents must be between 30-55 years of age and must be married for at least two years. If either of the applicants has a previous divorce, the length of the present marriage must be at least five years. Each applicant may not have more than two divorces. Families with up to four children are eligible to adopt a healthy child. Families with five children or more qualify to adopt a child with special placement needs. Single women may only apply for “special focus” children.

**Income:** China requires a minimum household income of \$30,000. An additional \$10,000 in family income is required for each additional child in the home.

**Travel:** At least one parent must travel to China to complete the adoption. It is strongly recommended that both parents travel. Bethany families travel to China in groups. Group travel is organized on your behalf, and can provide emotional support and reduce the costs of the trip. It is necessary to have both a U.S. passport and a visa in order to travel to China.

## PROCESS

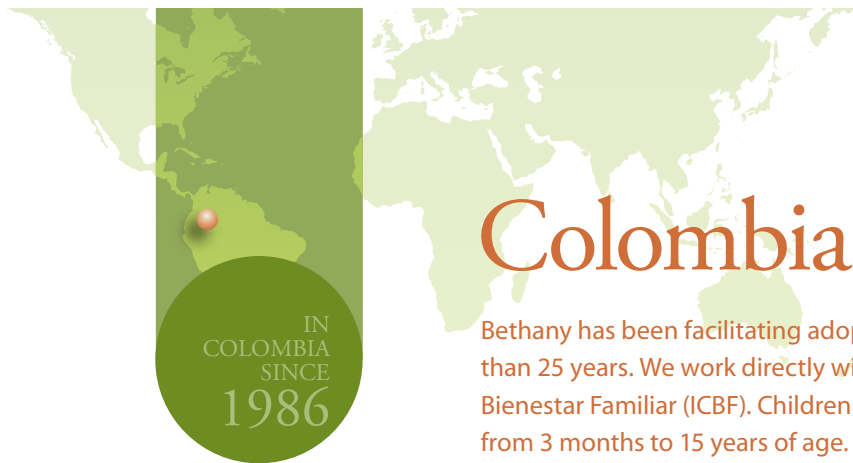
**1. Preliminary Application:** Bethany’s China team must approve your Preliminary and Formal Applications before you can formally begin your China adoption.

**2. Adoptive Home Study:** Four documented meetings are required for submission of a dossier to China.

**3. Dossier:** Bethany’s China team will review your dossier and submit it for authentication. The entire dossier must be authenticated by the Chinese Consulate before it can be sent to China. Your dossier will then be sent to and reviewed in China.

**4. Referral/Travel:** Travel typically occurs between six and 10 weeks after you accept a referral.

**5. Post-Adoption Reports:** Three post-adoption visits and reports are required. Reports are due at the following times: arrival, three, and six months. A final report is also due one year after adoption.



# Colombia

Bethany has been facilitating adoptions in Colombia for more than 25 years. We work directly with Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (ICBF). Children available for adoption range from 3 months to 15 years of age. Sibling groups and older children are also available. The majority of the children may have developmental or institutionalized delays as a result of living in orphanages. Some children qualify as special needs waiting children.

## REQUIREMENTS

**Family:** Each adoptive applicant must be a minimum of 25 years and a maximum of 55 years of age. ICBF has rules regarding the ages of the child and the ages of adoptive parents.

PARENT'S AGE	CHILD'S AGE
25-38 years	0-2 years and 11 months
39-41	3-4 years
42-44	5-6
45-47	7-8
48-55	9+

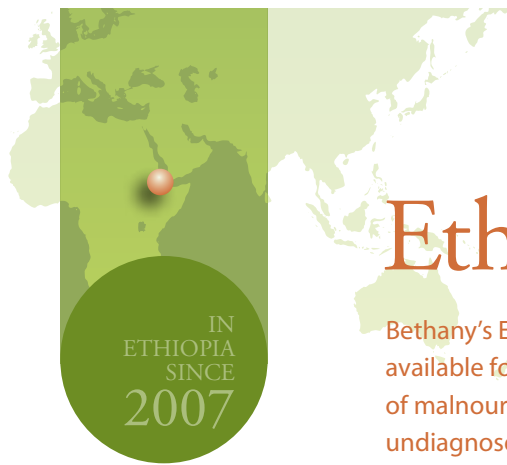
Adoption houses only accept childless couples for infants or a family who has previously adopted from the same adoption house. The wait is potentially longer if a family already has a child in the home. Single women may apply to adopt children who are 7 years or older, and must identify male role models and family support.

**Income:** Families must meet U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service income requirements and demonstrate financial stability.

**Travel:** Both parents must travel to Colombia to receive their child. One parent must remain in Colombia for the entire process, which can take six to nine weeks or more. If one parent needs to return to the U.S. during that time, we strongly recommend having another adult there to support you. A U.S. passport and Colombia adoption visa are required for travel to Colombia.

## PROCESS

- 1. Preliminary application:** Bethany's Colombia team must approve both your Preliminary and Formal Applications before you can formally begin your Colombia adoption.
- 2. Adoptive Home Study:** Four documented meetings are required for submission of a dossier to Colombia. Families are also required by ICBF to complete training for international adoption.
- 3. Dossier:** A legal translator in Colombia will translate your dossier into Spanish. After translation, the dossier will be presented to ICBF or an adoption house. Your family will receive a letter advising you of your approval.
- 4. Referral/Travel:** The current time frame varies greatly depending on the child desired. After approval by ICBF, the waiting time for a referral is about three to four years. The wait can be less for a child 7 years or older, a larger sibling group, or a child with special needs. When you have been given clearance to travel, you will need to obtain an adoption visa from the Colombian Consulate. Travel typically occurs between two and four months after you receive a referral.
- 5. Post-Adoption Reports:** Six post-adoption reports are required. Reports are due at these times: arrival, three, six, nine, 15, and 21 months. Prior to writing the final report, families are required to submit a copy of the certificate of citizenship and U.S. birth certificate.



# Ethiopia

Bethany's Ethiopia adoption program began in 2007. Children available for adoption from Ethiopia may have a history of malnourishment, low birth weight, and/or have other undiagnosed medical needs.

## REQUIREMENTS

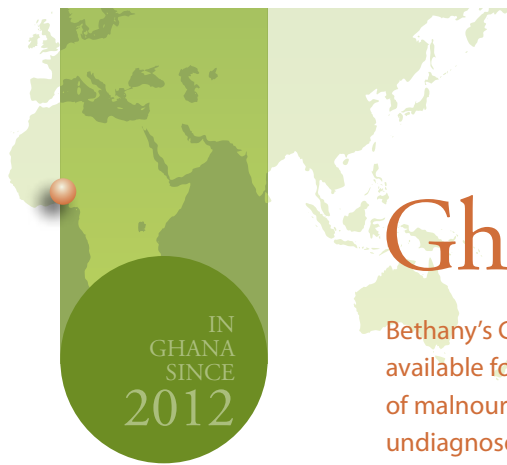
**Family:** Parents can be between the ages of 25 and 50+. Ethiopia prefers no more than 40 years age difference between parent and child. Parents must be married for at least one year, but five years is preferred, especially with a history of divorce. If either of the applicants has a previous divorce, a social worker will need to provide a recommendation. There are no limitations based on the number of current children in a household. Single applicants are accepted.

**Income:** Families must meet U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service income requirements.

**Travel:** Two trips are required. Both parents are required to make the first trip where the adoption will be finalized. For the second trip, only one parent is required to travel. It is strongly recommended that both parents travel. Parents need to have both a U.S. passport and visa to enter Ethiopia.

## PROCESS

- 1. Preliminary application:** Bethany's Ethiopia team must approve your Preliminary and Formal Applications before you can formally begin your Ethiopia adoption.
- 2. Adoptive Home Study:** In addition to the Home Study, four documented meetings are required for submission of a dossier to Ethiopia.
- 3. Dossier:** Your dossier will be sent to Ethiopia where further authentication and translation is required.
- 4. Referral/Travel:** Two trips are required of five to seven days in length.
- 5. Post-Adoption Reports:** Four post-adoption visits and reports are required. Reports are due at the following times: arrival, three, six, and 12 months. A final report is due at one year after adoption. After the first year, the Ethiopian government requests that informal post-adoption reports be written and submitted by your family each year until the child turns 15. Six good quality photos are required with each report.



# Ghana

Bethany's Ghana adoption program began in 2012. Children available for adoption from Ghana may have a history of malnourishment, low birth weight, and/or have other undiagnosed medical needs.

Ghana is a pilot program and is accepting a limited number of formal applications

## REQUIREMENTS

**Family:** At least one adoptive parent must be at least 25 years old, and at least 21 years older than the child(ren) they intend to adopt. Applicants over 50 years old may be considered on a case-by-case basis for the adoption of older children. Single applicants are \*not\* accepted. (Exceptions may be made for Ghanaian citizens.)

**Income:** Minimum household income must meet USCIS poverty guidelines.

**Travel:** Two to three trips are currently required with each being approximately one to three weeks.

## PROCESS

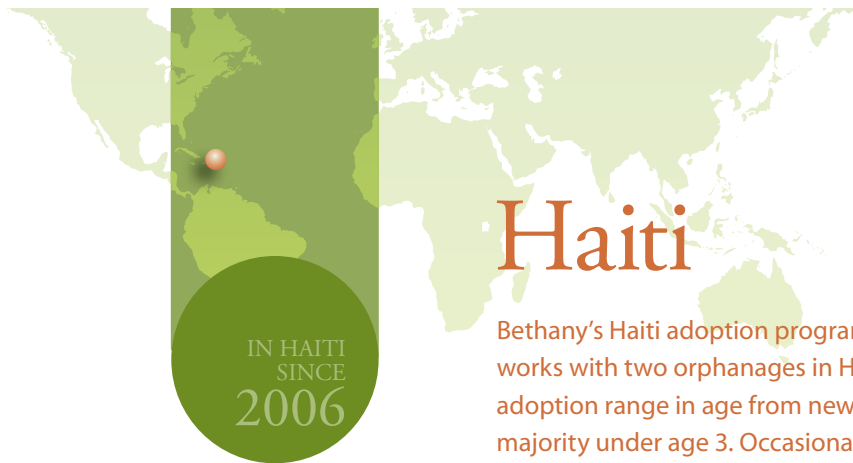
**1. Preliminary application:** Bethany's Ghana team must approve your Preliminary and Formal Applications before you can formally begin your Ghana adoption.

**2. Adoptive Home Study:** In addition to the Home Study, four documented meetings are required for submission of a dossier to Ghana.

**3. Dossier:** Your dossier and application will be sent to Ghana where it will be reviewed by the Department of Social Welfare.

**4. Referral/Travel:** The Department of Social Welfare will officially issue the referral. One to three trips are required.

**5. Post-Adoption Reports:** Eight post adoption visits and reports are required. Reports are due at the following times: arrival, three, six, 12, 24, 36, 48, and 60 months after placement. Six to 10 good quality photos are required with each report.



# Haiti

Bethany's Haiti adoption program began in 2006. Bethany works with two orphanages in Haiti. Children available for adoption range in age from newborns to 10 years, with the majority under age 3. Occasionally, older children or sibling groups are available. Children may have some developmental or institutionalized delays, or may have special needs. All children reside in orphanages until their adoption is finalized.

## REQUIREMENTS

**Family:** For married couples, one spouse must be at least 35 years of age at the time of application. The second applicant must be at least 27 years of age. Both applicants must be under age 55. The minimum length of marriage is 10 years, and more than one divorce is not accepted. You can have up to four children already in the family. If you already have children, this can add additional time to the adoption process. Couples with documented infertility must be married at least seven years. Single women may apply to adopt if they are between 35 and 50 years of age.

**Income:** The minimum U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service requirement for income must be met. One of Bethany's partners requires families meet 150% of poverty guidelines. The same partner requires families with five children earn at least \$100,00 per year.

**Travel:** Two trips are required. Both parents must travel for the 1st trip. Each trip will be three to five days in length. While in Haiti, you will stay in the orphanage's guesthouse wing. The orphanage will transport you to and from the airport and provide any other necessary transportation while in Haiti.

## PROCESS

- 1. Preliminary application:** Bethany's Haiti team must approve your Preliminary and Formal Applications before you can formally begin your adoption.
- 2. Adoptive Home Study:** Four documented meetings are required for submission of a dossier to Haiti.
- 3. Dossier:** The family will gather several documents and have them notarized, state sealed, and authenticated. Once the dossier has been submitted, the Haiti team will review it and send it on to the orphanage in Haiti.
- 4. Referral/Travel:** Two trips are required.
- 5. Post-Adoption Reports:** Four post-adoption visits and reports are required. Reports are due at the following times: arrival, three, six, and 12 months. A final report is due one year after adoption. After the first year, the orphanage requests that informal post-adoption reports be written and submitted by your family each year until the child turns 18. Photos must be attached to all reports.



# Hong Kong

Bethany began to facilitate adoptions from Hong Kong in 1999. Children available for adoption have moderate to severe special needs. Many of the waiting children have Down syndrome. Others have special needs such as blindness, cerebral palsy, or non-correctable medical problems. There are waiting children of all ages, with many more boys than girls.

## REQUIREMENTS

**Family:** Each adoptive applicant must be at least 25 years of age and generally under age 50. The upper age limit may be flexible. The minimum length of marriage is three years. If either of the applicants has a previous divorce, a social worker will need to provide a recommendation. It does not matter how many children are already in your family, as long as you can prove that you have sufficient resources to care for an additional child. Single applicants are welcome to apply.

**Income:** Hong Kong requires a minimum household income of \$30,000. It is also necessary that you meet U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service income requirements.

**Travel:** At least one parent is required to travel to Hong Kong for four to seven days to bring the child home. We recommend that both parents travel. A U.S. passport is required for travel to Hong Kong.

## PROCESS

- 1. Preliminary Application:** Bethany's Hong Kong team must approve your Preliminary and Formal Applications before you can formally begin your adoption.
- 2. Adoptive Home Study:** In addition to the Home Study, four documented meetings are required for submission of a dossier to Hong Kong.
- 3. Dossier:** After your dossier and Home Study have been received in Hong Kong, they will be reviewed by the Adoption Unit of the Social Welfare Department of the Hong Kong Government.
- 4. Referral/Travel:** Referral generally takes about three months after your dossier is received in Hong Kong. After this, it is about three months until your child is ready for travel.
- 5. Post-Adoption Reports:** Four post-adoption visits and reports are required. Reports are due at the following times: arrival, three, six, and 12 months. A final report is due one year after adoption. Your child's adoption will be finalized in your local county court approximately six months after placement.



# Lithuania

Bethany's adoption program in Lithuania began in 2001. Children available for adoption range in age from 2-15 years, with or without identified special needs. Waiting children may also include sibling groups and children with special placement needs. The children may have some developmental or institutionalized delays. All children reside in orphanages or foster homes until the completion of their adoption.

## REQUIREMENTS

**Family:** Adoptive parents must be between 25-48 years of age. Applicants older than 30 are preferred. The age difference between the parent and child can be 18 to 45 years. The minimum length of marriage varies. No more than one previous divorce per spouse is preferred. Families with no children, or no more than three children, are preferred. Single women of Lithuanian heritage are eligible to adopt children over age 6. Single women without Lithuanian heritage may be considered for children with special placement needs.

**Income:** Lithuania follows the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service requirements for income.

**Travel:** Two trips are required. Both parents must travel for the first trip. One parent may make the second trip to complete the immigration process. Both trips are seven to 14 days. We strongly recommend that both parents travel. While in Lithuania, the Family Law Center staff will assist with transportation, lodging, and appointments related to your adoption. A U.S. passport is required for travel to Lithuania.

## PROCESS

**1. Preliminary Application:** Bethany's Lithuania team must approve your Preliminary and Formal Applications before you can formally begin your adoption.

**2. Adoptive Home Study:** In addition to the Home Study, four documented meetings are required for submission of a dossier to Lithuania.

**3. Dossier:** Your dossier is translated when it arrives in Lithuania. It is then submitted to Adoption Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour for review and to be placed on the registry waiting list.

**4. Referral/Travel:** The current time frames for referrals are 12-24 months for applicants with proven Lithuanian heritage, and up to three years for applicants without Lithuanian heritage. Travel typically occurs two to four months after you receive a referral.

**5. Post-Adoption Reports:** Eight post-adoption visits and reports are required. Reports are due at the following times: arrival, three, six, 12, 18, 24, 36, and 48 months. Pictures must accompany these reports.



# Philippines

Bethany's adoption program in the Philippines began in 1986. Inter-Country Adoption Board (ICAB) is the Central Authority that approves and matches Filipino children to families.

## REQUIREMENTS

**Family:** Each adoptive applicant must be between 27 and 45 years of age. If you intend to adopt an older child, an age exception may be considered. Families with up to four children in the home are generally eligible but may be asked to adopt a child with special needs. Only single applicants who have received pre-approval for a waiting child will be accepted.

**Income:** The Philippines follow the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service income requirements.

**Travel:** At least one parent must travel to the Philippines to bring the child home. It is strongly recommended that both parents travel. A U.S. passport is necessary to travel to the Philippines.

## PROCESS

- 1. Preliminary Application:** Bethany's Philippines team must approve your Preliminary and Formal Applications before you can formally begin your adoption.
- 2. Adoptive Home Study:** In addition to the Home Study, four documented meetings are required for submission of a dossier to the Philippines.
- 3. Dossier:** When your dossier is received in the Philippines, it will be approved within a few months' time and you will be added to the list of approved applicants waiting to adopt.
- 4. Referral/Travel:** The current time frame is 24-48 months for a referral after your dossier is sent to the Philippines. Your child will typically be ready to travel four to six months after you receive a referral.
- 5. Post-Adoption Reports:** Three post-adoption reports are required. Reports are due at the following times: three, six, and 12 months. After the six-month report is completed, ICAB will send the Consent to Adoption form and your adoption can be finalized in your local county court.



# Russia

Bethany has facilitated adoptions in Russia since 1996. All adoptions are processed through the Regional Ministry of Education. Children available for adoption reside in orphanages and range in age. Most are orphans because their parents are unable to provide for them. Waiting children may have some developmental or institutional delays or have minor to significant special needs.

## REQUIREMENTS

**Family:** Adoptive applicants must be no more than 45 years older than the child. There is no minimum length of marriage. Both parents must be in good health with no history of crime, substance abuse, or mental illness. Single women may apply. It is recommended that there be one full year between the ages of children already in the adoptive family.

**Income:** Officials require financial stability and expect a minimum of \$60,000 annual income per family.

**Travel:** Both parents must travel to Russia to complete the adoption process. Two trips are required. The first trip will be approximately seven to 10 days, and the second trip 21-28 days. It is possible to break the second trip into two shorter trips. Both a U.S. passport and a visa are necessary travel to Russia.

## PROCESS

- 1. Preliminary Application:** Bethany's Russia team must approve your Preliminary and Formal Applications before you can formally begin your adoption.
- 2. Adoptive Home Study:** Four documented meetings are required for submission of a dossier to Russia. Families are also required to complete training for international adoption.
- 3. Dossier:** Your dossier will be sent to Russia for translation and authentication.
- 4. Referral/Travel:** Russian staff will assist with the arrangements to travel to Moscow for your U.S. embassy appointment. You will spend three to five working days in Moscow and will be assisted through this process. Russian law requires that all adoptive parents register their children with the Russian consulate in the U.S.
- 5. Post-Adoption Reports:** Five post-adoption reports are required. Reports are due at the following times: three, six, 12, 24, and 36 months from the day of your court decree. Your Final Order of Adoption is issued in Russia.



# South Korea

Bethany's adoption program in South Korea began in 1982. We are licensed to place healthy infants from South Korea in adoptive homes in five states: Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, and Georgia. In other states with a Bethany office, we can place children with special placement needs. Children can be 8-12 months old at placement. Typically, more boys are available than girls. Families must be open to either gender.

## REQUIREMENTS

**Family:** Adoptive applicants must be between 25-43 years of age. The minimum length of marriage is three years and no more than one divorce per spouse is allowed. Families with up to four children in the home are eligible to adopt. Single applicants are not accepted.

**Income:** South Korea requires a minimum household income of \$30,000. Additionally, South Korea follows the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service requirements for income.

**Travel:** One parent is required to travel to South Korea for four to seven days to bring home the child. Travel is encouraged for both adoptive parents. A U.S. passport is required for travel to South Korea.

## PROCESS

**1. Preliminary Application:** Bethany's South Korea team must approve your Preliminary and Formal Applications before you can formally begin your adoption.

**2. Adoptive Home Study:** Four documented meetings are required for submission of a dossier to South Korea. After these meetings, your Home Study will be submitted to Holt Children's Services.

**3. Referral/Travel:** When your Home Study is completed and approved, it will be sent to South Korea. The current time frame is 16-24 months for a referral after your Home Study approval date. Travel typically occurs four to eight months after you receive a referral.

**4. Post-Adoption Reports:** Four post-adoption reports are required. Reports are due at the following times: arrival, three, six, and 12 months. Adoptions are finalized in your local county court approximately six months after placement.



# Uganda

Bethany's Uganda adoption program began in 2012. Children available for adoption from Uganda may have a history of malnourishment, low birth weight, and/or have other undiagnosed medical needs.

Uganda is a pilot program and is closed to new applications at this time.

## REQUIREMENTS

**Family:** At least one applicant must be at least 25 years old and 21 years older than the child they plan to adopt. Single parents may be able to adopt, but the courts strongly prefer to place children with couples. Single women may apply to adopt a female child.

**Income:** Minimum household income must meet USCIS poverty guidelines.

**Travel:** Two trips of approximately two weeks each are currently required. Both adoptive parents must attend the court trip (first trip).

## PROCESS

- 1. Preliminary application:** Bethany's Uganda team must approve your Preliminary and Formal Applications before you can formally begin your Uganda adoption.
- 2. Adoptive Home Study:** In addition to the Home Study, four documented meetings are required for submission of a dossier to Uganda.
- 3. Dossier:** Your dossier will be sent to Uganda where it will be reviewed by Bethany's partner.
- 4. Referral/Travel:** Two trips of approximately two weeks are required. Both parents must travel at least once, both on the first trip.
- 5. Post-Adoption Reports:** Four post placement visits and reports are required. After the first year, informal post placement reports are required to be written and submitted by the family annually until the child/ren reaches the age of 18. Six to 10 good quality photos are required with each report.

Note: Additional post placement reports may be required by your local county court in order to finalize the adoption in the US.

# Questions about International Adoption

The following are frequently asked questions about international waiting children. If you have other questions, do not hesitate to contact us. We are here to support you in adopting a child from another country.

## Who are waiting children?

At Bethany, we consider waiting children to be those who do not have permanent families and are legally available for international adoption. These children are beyond infancy and may be as old as 15 years. They may be:

- Part of a sibling group.
- Dealing with past abuse, poverty, neglect, or trauma.
- Living in an orphanage or group home.
- Living with physical, medical, or developmental challenges.

## What is the Waiting Child program at Bethany?

Bethany is dedicated to finding loving and permanent families for children based on the children's needs and the prospective family's strengths. The children's information is shared with us through the countries we serve in the

hope of finding forever families for them. Each year, we help hundreds of waiting children join their permanent families in the United States.

## What is the process for adopting a child from another country?

Bethany has a list of about 300 waiting children from other countries. These children are in need of a permanent home and a family to love them unconditionally. In addition to the standard adoption process, each country has specific requirements that families must follow.

After contacting Bethany, you will participate in a Home Study. This study involves a series of interviews and a home visit. Upon approval, a Bethany adoption specialist will help you prepare a dossier, complete immigration papers, and do other paperwork. A child will be referred to you, and the adoption will occur in the child's country of origin. Following this, the immigration process will be finalized and Bethany's Post-Adoption Services will support you after you have adopted your child.

## Where can I get information about waiting children?

Start by completing the free, online [\*International Preliminary Application\*](#). If you change your mind, you are not obliged to proceed after submitting this application. When Bethany has approved your application, you will gain access to pictures and descriptions of the international waiting children that Bethany serves.

## DO I QUALIFY FOR INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION?

Each country sets its own eligibility rules for adoptive parents. Please see pages 14-24 to learn about each country's specific requirements. The following requirements apply to all international programs:

- One parent must be a U.S. citizen.
- Household income must be at least 125% of the U.S. poverty line for nonmilitary families.
- If married, applicants must be at least 18 years old. If single, applicants must be at least 25 years old.

## 10 Steps to International Adoption

1. Free Preliminary Application
2. Formal Application
3. Home Study and pre-adoption education
4. Begin immigration process
5. Dossier completion
6. Waiting time and additional pre-adoption education
7. Referral of child
8. Travel and finalize adoption process in child's country of origin
9. Complete immigration process
10. Post-adoption services

### Can I request a specific child?

Bethany adoption specialists will contact you to discuss your interests. Each country has different requirements about the timing of matching a child with a family. Some children are listed with other agencies, and Bethany staff may need to ensure that the child is still available for adoption.

### How long does it take to adopt a waiting child?

The international adoption process may move more quickly than the standard adoption process. However, the process varies from country to country. Your family will need to complete all of the country's adoption requirements, including an approved Home Study and dossier. Many factors come into play, and knowledgeable Bethany staff can guide you along the way.

### Can single women adopt a waiting child?

Single women may be eligible to adopt a child from certain countries such as Hong Kong,

Colombia, Philippines, Bulgaria, Lithuania, and Russia.

### Is our family right for international adoption?

We seek families that are stable, loving, and nurturing while embracing the concept of becoming a multicultural family. Your Bethany adoption specialist can talk with you about how a child could be welcomed into your family as you accept your child's heritage. We can also connect you with other families who have adopted internationally through Bethany. They can be a great resource to you.

### What are the needs of children waiting for international adoption?

Each waiting child comes with different needs. Some needs may include learning a new language or adjusting to your family after living in an orphanage. Other needs may range from minor to significant. We recommend that you research the specific needs of the child to learn as much as you can. Bethany staff can help you to understand issues that are common in international adoption, such as institutionalization, bonding and attachment, and developmental delays.

The needs of waiting children generally fall into three categories:

**1. Minor Needs:** These include needs that may be corrected. A child with a minor need may need surgery or special therapies.

*Examples:* Cleft lip and palate, repaired heart condition, missing fingers or toes, club feet, or mild developmental delays.

**2. Moderate Needs:** These include conditions that may not have been identified at the time of placement, but could appear later as an identifiable developmental or medical issue. These children may have effects from medical issues or may have experienced neglect, abuse, or trauma.



SEE OUR ONLINE [FINANCING ADOPTION RESOURCE GUIDE](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT INTERNATIONAL WAITING CHILDREN, SEE OUR ONLINE [INTERNATIONAL WAITING CHILDREN GUIDE](#).

*Examples:* At-risk factors from the birth history (drug or alcohol abuse), psychological trauma, or physical challenges, such as a missing limb or scoliosis.

**3. Significant Needs:** These include serious or life-long issues. They may be developmental, medical, or physical challenges requiring long-term care.

*Examples:* Non-correctable medical needs, Down syndrome, fetal alcohol effects, spina bifida, hydrocephaly, cerebral palsy, or missing limbs.

### What kind of support will Bethany give us?

Adoption is a lifelong process, and through it, we will be here to help you. Your Bethany adoption specialist can provide support through training, resources, and connecting you with other adoptive parents and support groups specific to your child's needs. After you adopt a child, we will also be there to help you with our Post-Adoption Services.

Families often have questions after adopting a child. Bethany is committed to providing post-adoption services through trained counselors, mentors, and support groups. Bethany's Post-Adoption Services vary based on location. Following placement, a Bethany adoption specialist will make follow-up contact with your family and send reports to the country from which you adopted.



### Is financial assistance available?

Because of our generous donors, Bethany is able to heavily subsidize adoption costs. On top of that, you have several options for further assistance:

- Bethany's Caring Connection Fund
- Grants through many other agencies
- Federal adoption tax credit
- State tax credits
- Employer assistance
- Short-term loan programs

We will help you discover ways to finance your adoption. See our free online [\*Financing Adoption Resource Guide\*](#) for more information.

### Tell me about Bethany's Caring Connection Fund.

Bethany's Caring Connection Fund provides financial assistance to families adopting children with special needs. Grants are awarded to families based on the severity of the child's needs and the financial needs of the adoptive family.

### Are there expenses involved in international adoption that differ from those in a domestic adoption?

There are country fees and expenses related to travel. Most countries require adoptive parents to travel to the child's country to complete the adoption. Your adoption specialist will provide detailed information about the fees associated with adopting from your specific country.

### When will the adoption be finalized?

The adoption may be finalized in the country from which you are adopting. Some countries also require you to complete the adoption in the state where you live, after which you will receive your final order of adoption.

For more information about international waiting children, see our online [\*International Adoption Guide\*](#).



BETHANY'S ADOPTION  
**DICTIONARY**



# Adoption language

To help you navigate and understand the adoption process, here are common words and terms you are likely to encounter, along with explanations.

**Adoptable Child:** Any child wanting to be adopted.

**Adopted Person or Adoptee:** Someone who has been legally adopted.

**Adoption Agreement:** A document in which birth and adoptive parents outline their plans for contact and communication, best thought of as a covenant promise.

**Adoption Day:** The day of either the adoptive placement or the day the adoption is finalized by the court.

**Adoption of a Child With a Disability or Other Special Placement Need:** The adoption of a child born either domestically or in another country who:

- Has physical, emotional, and/or developmental disabilities
- Is past the infancy stage
- Is a member of a sibling groups or racial minority
- Has some combination of these characteristics

**Adoption Plan:** The decision made by parents to have their child grow up in an adoptive family.

**Adoption Specialist:** A trained professional who assesses prospective adoptive parents and counsels them regarding adoption and parenting.

**Adoption Triad:** Birthparents, adoptive parents, and the adopted child.

**Adoption Kinship Network or Adoption Constellation:** The adoption triad as well as extended family members who have relationships with the child.

**Adoptive Parent:** Adult who adopts a child.

**At-Risk Placement or Legal-Risk Placement:**

The placement of a child with an adoptive family before the birthparents' legal rights have ended; or when rights have been ended but any revocation period has not yet expired.

**Birthparent (birthmother or birthfather):**

Biological or genetic parents of a child, sometimes called first parents, and generally used to refer to parents who place their child with an adoptive family.

**Child who is HIV-Positive or Child With HIV:** A child who is infected with the human immunodeficiency virus.

**Child With Identified Disabilities or Child With Identified Special Needs:**

Children with known physical, emotional, or developmental disabilities.

**Child Without Identified Disabilities or Child Without Identified Special Needs:**

Children who may have physical, emotional, or developmental disabilities, but they have not been identified prior to adoption or an adoption referral.

**Confidential Adoption or Closed Adoption:**

An adoption plan where non-identifying information is shared, but birth and adoptive parents do not meet, do not share identifying information, and do not have planned contact.

**Designated Adoption, Private Adoption, or Identified Adoption:**

An adoption in which expectant parents identify an adoptive family without the help of an agency or attorney.

**Direct Consent Adoption:** An adoption where parental rights are transferred directly from the birthparents to the adoptive parents.

**Direct Placement:** When adoptive families receive the baby immediately after discharge from the hospital.

**Disrupted Adoption:** An adoption that fails before finalization.

**Domestic Adoption:** The adoption of a child who is born and adopted within the same country.

**Embryo Adoption:** Embryos received from one couple by another couple with the hope of a pregnancy and birth of a child; while not a legal adoption it has many of the same aspects.

**Embryo Donation:** The donation of embryos created through Assisted Reproductive Technology which will not be implanted in the genetic mother but are instead donated to another set of parents for the intended purpose of pregnancy, birth, and parenting by that couple.

**Expectant Parent:** Parent expecting a child who is considering whether to parent or make an adoption plan.

**Families Waiting to Adopt:** Families who have decided to adopt a child and have completed a Home Study and educational requirements.

**Finalization:** The legal process that makes the adoption permanent and binding.

**Home Study or Family Assessment:** A series of interviews (both joint and individual) and home visits, along with a collection of documents and references that are part of the required pre-adoption process for all adoptive families.

**Identifying Information:** Information about members of the adoption triad, such as full names, addresses, and other contact information.

**In-Country Adoption:** Adoption of a child by parents in the child's home country.

**Independent Adoption:** An adoption in which the child is placed directly with the adoptive couple, usually through an attorney

or intermediary, often without pre-adoption counseling for the birthparents or the adoptive couple.

**International Adoption:** Adoption of a child who was born in another country; sometimes referred to as intercountry adoption.

**Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children:** A law that requires written notice and prior approval of the placement of a child from one state to another state, either for foster care or adoption.

**Interim Care:** A temporary, loving home for an infant while the parents make a final decision regarding adoption or parenting.

**Multicultural Family:** A family who adopts transracially or transculturally, making the family multicultural in identity.

**Networking:** A process in which families use a variety of ways to make expectant parents aware of their desire to adopt a child.

**Non-Identifying Information:** Information that allows the members of the adoption triad to know about each other, but without identifying information. First names, physical descriptions, occupation, education, personality characteristics, hobbies, interests, religious affiliation, and medical information are examples of non-identifying information.

**Older Child Adoption:** The adoption of children in the United States who have been permanently removed from their parents because of abuse or neglect. Sometimes referred to as adoption after foster care or foster adoption by other agencies.

**Open Adoption:** An adoption plan in which identifying information about birth and adoptive families is openly shared, and there is ongoing and direct contact after placement.

**Post-Adoption (or Post-Placement)**

**Counseling:** Counseling offered for adoptive families and birthparents after a child is placed for adoption.

**Post-Adoption (or Post-Placement) Reports:**

Written reports submitted to the courts by the social worker after the child is placed with the adoptive family; the number of visits and reports varies from state to state.

**Post-Adoption (or Post-Placement)**

**Support Services:** Any assistance provided to the adoptive family and birthparents after placement that always includes visits in order to prepare post-placement reports; other services are provided, as necessary.

**Pre-Placement Counseling:** Counseling provided to prepare expectant parents for the release of their child and to prepare adoptive couples for parenthood.

**Profile:** Pictures and information that introduce a prospective adoptive family to expectant parents considering adoptive placement.

**Relinquishment of Parental Rights:** See Voluntary Termination of Parental Rights.

**Semi-Open Adoption:** An adoption plan in which there is planned communication through pictures, letters, phone calls, or e-mails, often spelled out in a written agreement that takes place between the adoptive parents and the birthparents; communication is arranged and facilitated through a third party who is sensitive to the needs of both families.



**Special Needs Adoption:** The adoption of children who have physical, emotional, and/or developmental disabilities, who are older children, or who are members of a sibling group or a racial minority (as defined by the federal government), either born domestically or in another country.

**Special Placement Needs:** The needs of a child for an adoptive family specifically equipped or trained to meet the child's needs and/or disabilities. Examples might be prospective adoptive parents who have a flexible parenting style that better enables them to parent a child with challenging behaviors, or prospective adoptive parents who have completed the specialized training and education necessary to better parent a child with specific medical needs such as HIV/AIDS.

**Traditional Agency Adoption:** An adoption in which an agency counsels and brings together expectant parents, children, and adoptive parents.

**Transracial Adoption:** Adoption of a child of one race, color, or national origin by a family of a different race, color, or national origin.

**Voluntary Termination of Parental Rights (sometimes referred to as "Surrenders" or "Relinquishment"):** The legal step necessary for parents to place their child with adoptive parents.

**Waiting Children:** Children who are available for adoption and are waiting for an adoptive family to be identified who can meet their particular needs.

**Waiting Families:** Families who have been approved for adoption and are waiting for a referral or to be chosen by expectant parents.

# The power of words

Your words carry weight. They reflect your values, emotions, and opinions. They can wound or heal, alienate or educate. Some words can be life-giving. Others can elicit feelings of shame or embarrassment.

The language of adoption is full of commonly used expressions that we encounter as we minister to birth and adoptive parents. We encourage you to use the following terms that reflect adoption in a positive light.

<b>RATHER THAN...</b>	<b>WE SUGGEST...</b>
Real parent	Birthparent, Birthmother, Birthfather
Natural parent	Biological parent
Unwed mother	Single parent
Real child	Birthchild
Illegitimate child	Child of unmarried parents
Put up for adoption	Make an adoption plan
Give up for adoption	Choose adoption
Keep a child	Parent a child
Hard-to-place child	Child with special placement needs
Special needs	Disabilities (physical, emotional, developmental)
Unwanted pregnancy	Unplanned, unintended, or untimely pregnancy
Find parents	Search for birthparents
Foreign adoption	International adoption
"Gotcha Day"	Family Day* or Adoption Day

The use of terms such as "is adopted," "was adopted," or "adoptee" may be appropriate in some situations. Legally, adoption is a one-time event. Adoption is also about joining a forever family, so there is a lifelong aspect to adoption.

\* Family Day is a less formal term preferred by some adoptive families. This refers to the day when the family was enlarged by the addition of an adopted child.



Bethany Christian Services manifests the love and compassion of Jesus Christ by protecting and enhancing the lives of children and families through quality social services.