

## Other Legalities

Individuals eligible for and/or receiving services or benefiting from programs funded by or through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services are protected against unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation and national origin.

To learn more, ask your assessor for the JFS 08000, "Your Rights," document or download it from <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/>. If you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against, contact:

The Ohio Department of Job & Family Services  
Office of Employee & Business Services  
Bureau of Civil Rights  
30 E. Broad Street, 30th Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-3414  
Telephone: (614) 466-2703  
Toll free: 1-866-227-6353  
TTY hearing impaired: 1-866-221-6700  
Fax: (614) 752-6381

All forms mentioned in this publication are available online at <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms>

John R. Kasich, Governor  
State of Ohio

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Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

Office of Communications  
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An Equal Opportunity Employer & Service Provider

## FOR BIRTH PARENTS

As a birth parent, you can decide the path for your own life and that of your child.



The information in this brochure is intended to help you plan for you and your child.

**ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT MAKING AN ADOPTION PLAN?**

## Ohio Adoption Law

Placing a child for adoption is permanent, and once the decision is made, it cannot be changed. Before you make this important decision, you must talk to an assessor. An assessor is a specially trained social worker, counselor or other adoption professional. He or she may work for an adoption agency or the probate court. If you are not sure whether someone is a qualified assessor, ask to see the signed JFS 01680, "Verification of Assessor Qualifications."

You must talk with the assessor at least once before you sign any adoption paperwork. He or she will give you complete information about services and options you may have. The assessor can tell you about:

- Parenting your child yourself
- Placing your child with a relative, temporarily or permanently
- Placing your child with a friend or nonrelative, temporarily or permanently
- Guardianship and foster care options
- State and federal laws on adoption, including the Indian Child Welfare Act, Multiethnic Placement Act and Interethnic Placement Act
- Making an adoption plan

Making an adoption plan means placing your child for adoption with another family. Your child may be placed with a relative, a friend, or someone who is working with an adoption agency or attorney.

An assessor should tell you about community resources and other information, such as:

- Counseling
- Putative Father Registry
- Birth parent support groups
- State and federal financial help programs
- Housing services
- Employment services
- Child care
- Health care
- Nutrition services
- Legal services

You can also call the Help Me Grow Hotline, Ohio's family support telephone line, at 1-800-755-GROW for more information.

Ohio law says if you place your child for adoption:

- You must wait at least 72 hours after your child is born before you can sign the forms to voluntarily end your rights as a birth parent.
- An assessor must give you the information in this brochure about services and options at least 72 hours before you sign the forms.

Your local bar association can refer you to a lawyer if you want to talk to one before signing any forms. You cannot have the same lawyer as the adoptive parents. If you cannot afford a lawyer, you can ask your county probate court to choose one to represent you in the adoption. The court can choose one to represent your child's best interests.

Additional information on adoption issues may be found in the "Ohio Adoption Guide," JFS 01675, which is available online at <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/>.

You also may contact the public children services agency or private child placing agency in your county for a copy of this publication.

## Types of Adoption

Adoptions may be open or confidential. You can choose what kind of adoption plan you want to make.

You have the right to decide what information to share with your child and the adoptive family. You will complete forms to release or not release information. You may choose to release only information that does not identify you, such as social and medical history, while not releasing your name, address or phone number.

You may decide to choose a more open adoption for you and your child. There are many types of open adoptions, from a one-time meeting or exchange of pictures to ongoing direct or indirect contact.

You may want a type of open adoption for your child not offered by your current agency or facilitator. If so, they may refer you to an agency that is better able to meet your wishes.

Section 3107.63 of the Ohio Revised Code clearly says you have a right to set up an open adoption with the adoptive family. However, any open relationship, written or verbal, is strictly voluntary. This means that you or the adoptive family can later change the amount of contact, or choose to stop contact entirely. Written agreements between birth parents and adoptive parents are "good faith" agreements meant to meet the best interests of the child.

Open adoption arrangements are not shared parenting arrangements. The adoptive family holds all legal rights and responsibilities for the child. The adoptive family has the right to temporarily or permanently change or stop contact if the family feels it is in the child's best interest.

## Adoption Plan

If you decide an adoption plan is best for you and your child, write down or tell the assessor everything you want the child to know about you and his or her family. Please try to give a complete and accurate family health history so your child can receive good care now and in the future.

Most adopted children want to learn more about their birth families as they grow up. Please give as much information as possible to help answer your child's questions. Your adoption assessor also will tell you how you can leave more information, such as scrapbooks and cards, for your child later.

You may have the option to review descriptions of the potential adoptive families, depending on the policy of the agency you work with. When possible, the agency may try to place your child with the family that you prefer.

Sometimes it may not be possible to place your child with the family you choose. Agencies are not allowed to consider the request of a birth parent to place a child into a family based on race, color or national origin. In other situations the family may not agree to the placement, or it may not appear to be the best place for the child. If this happens, you may be able to choose another family.



## Other Things to Know

Ask for copies of any forms you sign. It is your right to have these forms. Be sure to save them.

Once a child is adopted, his or her birth certificate will be changed, and the original will be sealed. Many birth parents who make an adoption plan for their child choose to get a copy of the child's birth certificate before it is changed.

Birth certificates are available from the Ohio Department of Health, by mail, online at <https://odhgateway.odh.ohio.gov/OrderBirthCertificates/> or through your local Vital Statistics Office. If you have questions about your child's birth certificate, you may contact the Ohio Department of Health at (614) 466-2531.

Adoption is permanent and final. Talk to your adoption assessor and ask what services are available to you, such as counseling or support groups. Many birth parents have found such services to be very helpful. You also may find out about available services by contacting public or private agencies in your area.

## Putative Father Registry

The Putative Father Registry is a computerized database, maintained by ODJFS, that allows anyone who thinks he may have fathered a child to register to be notified if that child is made available for adoption. If the putative father is notified, then he may seek legal counsel regarding his rights. For information about the Putative Father Registry, contact:

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services  
P.O. Box 183204  
Columbus, OH 43218-3204  
1-888-313-3100