

General Information on Adoptions

Seek legal advice about your family's options before beginning any adoption. Every family is different and adoption may not be necessary for some families. Visit the California Court's Online Self-Help Center adoption page to get copies of adoption forms, look for organizations that provide legal help with adoptions, and learn how to complete the adoption process on your own if you cannot afford a lawyer: www.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp-adoption.htm. You can also get copies of adoption forms at your local court clerk's office.

In California there are several kinds of adoption. This form includes instructions for:

- Stepparent/domestic partner adoptions (*page 1*)
- Independent, agency, and international adoptions (*page 2*)
- Adoption of an Indian (*Native American*) child (*page 2*)
- Open adoptions (*page 2*)

Stepparent/Domestic Partner Adoptions

Answer these questions to get started.

- Was the adopting parent in a union with the birth parent at the time the child was born? Check one Yes No
A "union" means a:
 - Marriage;
 - California registered domestic partnership; or
 - Registered domestic partnership or civil union from out of state that is legally equivalent to a marriage.
- Is the adopting parent still in a union with the birth parent? Check one Yes No
(See the above explanation of a "union")

If you answered "No" to **either** question, complete items 1 through 4 below for a *Stepparent/Domestic Partner Adoption*.

If you answered "YES" to **both** questions, complete items 1 and 2, only, for a *Stepparent Adoption to Confirm Parentage*.

1 Fill out court forms.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> | ADOPT-200 | <i>Adoption Request</i> | This tells the judge about you and the child you are adopting. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | ADOPT-210 | <i>Adoption Agreement</i> | This tells the judge that you and the child, if over 12, agree to the adoption. Fill it out, but do not sign it until the judge asks you to sign it. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | ADOPT-215 | <i>Adoption Order</i> | The judge signs this form if your adoption is approved. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | ICWA-010(A) | <i>Indian Child Inquiry Attachment</i> | This lets the judge know that you have asked whether the child may have Indian ancestry. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | ICWA-020 | <i>Parental Notification of Indian Status</i> | This proves that the child's parents have been asked about Indian ancestry. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | ADOPT-205 (or an equivalent declaration) | <i>Declaration Confirming Parentage in Stepparent Adoption</i> | This tells the court how you conceived your child and whether there are any other parents. Only use this if you are seeking a stepparent adoption to confirm parentage. See above for more information on this type of adoption. Both the birth parent and the adopting parent must complete a separate declaration. |

2 Take your forms to court.

Take the completed forms to the court clerk in the county where you live. The court will charge a filing fee. Or take the forms to your lawyer or adoption agency, if you are using one.

3 The social worker writes a report.

In most adoptions, a social worker writes a report. This report gives important information to the judge about the adopting parents and the child. The social worker will ask you questions. You may have to fill out forms. You may be required to pay a fee for this report. The social worker will file the report with the court and send you a copy. When you get the report, ask the clerk for a date for your adoption hearing.

4 Go to court on the date of your hearing.

Bring:

- The child you are adopting Form ADOPT-210 Form ADOPT-215
 A camera, if you want a photo of you and your child with the judge (*optional*) Friends/relatives (*optional*)

Independent, Agency, or International Adoptions

If this is an independent, agency, or international adoption, fill out and file the forms listed in items 1 through 4 below.

Note: The rights of the existing parents usually terminate with adoptions. In an independent adoption, if the existing and adopting parents agree, the rights of the existing parent(s) do not have to be terminated.

1 Fill out court forms.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ADOPT-200 | <i>Adoption Request</i> | This tells the judge about you and the child you are adopting. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ADOPT-210 | <i>Adoption Agreement</i> | This tells the judge that you and the child, if over 12, agree to the adoption. Fill it out, but do not sign it until the judge asks you to sign it. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ADOPT-215 | <i>Adoption Order</i> | The judge signs this form if your adoption is approved. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ADOPT-230 | <i>Adoption Expenses</i> | This lets the judge know what payments were made that relate to the child you are adopting. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ICWA-010(A) | <i>Indian Child Inquiry Attachment</i> | This lets the judge know that you have asked whether the child may have Indian ancestry. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ICWA-020 | <i>Parental Notification of Indian Status</i> | This proves that the child's parents have been asked about Indian ancestry. |

2 Take your forms to court.

Take the completed forms to the court clerk in the county where you live. The court will charge a filing fee. Or take the forms to your lawyer or adoption agency, if you are using one.

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4 Go to court on the date of your hearing.

- Bring: The child you are adopting Form ADOPT-210 Form ADOPT-215 Form ADOPT-230
 A camera, if you want a photo of you and your child with the judge (*optional*) Friends/relatives (*optional*)

“Open” Adoption

If you want your child to have contact with his or her birth family, request an “open” adoption. Form [ADOPT-310](#) describes the type of contact the birth family will have with your child. In addition to the forms listed in 1 on pages 1 and 2, fill out and bring to court Form ADOPT-310.

Adopting an Indian Child

In addition to the forms listed in ① on pages 1 and 2, fill out and bring to court:

- Form ADOPT-220 *Adoption of Indian Child*
 Form ADOPT-225 *Parent of Indian Child Agrees to End Parental Rights*

If you are adopting through a tribal customary adoption:

- Attach a copy of the tribal customary adoption order to *Adoption Request*, ADOPT-200
 Attach a copy of the tribal customary adoption order to the *Adoption Order*, ADOPT-215