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Adoption Eligibility: Get the Facts

Family & Relationships

4-minute read



You're interested in adopting — congratulations! Your excitement and anticipation may also come with questions about adoption requirements, adoption laws or the child adoption process, such as: Do I have to be married to adopt a child? What's the age limit for adoption? What are the requirements I face?

In some cases, answers to those kinds of questions can depend on the state where you live. But these general guidelines regarding the financial, legal and medical eligibility requirements for adoption in the U.S. will get you started:

- **Age:** While there is no age limit for an adoptive parent, there are minimum age requirements. Check with your state on how young adoptive parents may be.

- **Health:** You should be in good health so you can raise your child to adulthood. Every country requires medical information as part of your record.
- **Income:** Your income may be from employment, pension or disability payments. Both parents may work outside the home. There is no pre-determined income level to be eligible.
- **Home:** There are no requirements for the size, style or ownership of your home, but it must be a safe place to raise a child.
- **Parental status:** You may be experienced parents with children in the home, be first-time parents or have grown children.
- **Marital status:** Agencies will consider single men and women, those who are married and those in committed, yet-unmarried relationships.
- **Same-sex couple:** Same-sex adoption is legal in all 50 states. Check out [Lamda Legal](#) to learn more about legal protections for LGBT people and their families.
- **Disabilities:** People with disabilities are eligible for adopting, as their rights are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Adopting from another country

According to the U.S. Department of State, if you are pursuing what's known as an intercountry adoption, you must meet certain requirements to bring a foreign-born child whom you've adopted to the United States. Some of the basic requirements include:

- You must be a U.S. citizen.
- If you are unmarried, you must be at least 25 years old.
- If you are married, you and your spouse must jointly adopt the child (even if you are separated but not divorced). Your spouse must also be either a U.S. citizen or have legal status in the United States.
- You must meet certain requirements that will determine your suitability as a prospective adoptive parent, including criminal background checks, fingerprinting and a home study.

Want to learn how the child adoption process works in your state? The [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#) and the [Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Administrator](#) are good resources.

Consider checking with an attorney or adoption agency

If you're not sure what the law does — and doesn't — allow in terms of adoption eligibility, check with an attorney who has experience in adoption. Or call a local agency. Preparing yourself with the most accurate information before you start the process may lead to fewer disappointments, frustrations and delays along the way.

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