

## 📖 Topic Page: [Adoption](#)

Definition: **adoption** from *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate(R) Dictionary*

 [pronunciation](#)

(14c) : the act of adopting :the state of being adopted



Image from: [As a woman's body prepares for pregnancy... in Encyclopedia of Global Health](#)

Summary Article: **adoption**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

act by which the legal relation of parent and child is created. Adoption was recognized by Roman law but not by common law. Statutes first introduced adoption into U.S. law in the mid-19th cent., and today it is allowed in all states of the United States and in Great Britain. Adoption is generally a judicial proceeding, requiring a hearing before a judge. Adoption statutes usually provide that the consent of the parents or guardian of the child—and that of the child, if above a certain age—must be obtained. An adopted child generally assumes the rights and duties of a natural legitimate child. Similarly, the rights and duties accompanying natural parenthood generally accompany adoptive parenthood (e.g., the right of custody and the obligation of support). The natural parents have no right to control an adopted child, nor have they any duties toward it, but in some states the child does not lose the right to inherit from them.

In many cases children are adopted by relatives. Many states now permit adoption by unmarried adults; some allow adoption by homosexual couples. Most adoptions are of the same race. Transracial adoptions are controversial, pitting issues of culture and heritage against the need of a child for a stable parent-child relationship as early in life as possible, regardless of race. The Multiethnic Placement Act (1994) made it illegal for U.S. states to hold up adoptions solely in order to match racial or ethnic background of the child.

In adoption by unrelated adults, the courts have traditionally attempted to ease adjustment to the adoptive family and protect the privacy of the (often unwed) mother by maintaining secrecy regarding the child's birth parents. Since the 1970s, however, a growing number of adopted children have attempted to identify their birth parents, and “open adoption,” in which adoptive and birth parents maintain a relationship, has become more accepted. Questions of parental rights and where these stand vis-à-vis the rights and best interests of the child have also been highlighted in cases in which the courts transferred custody of adopted or fostered children to birth parents who had previously given them up.

Many children are adopted through public or private agencies, but a growing number are adopted through private placement, in which the prospective adoptive parents advertise for or are otherwise put into contact with a birth mother, usually with the help of a lawyer who is familiar with the process and the legal requirements of the individual states. As birth control and abortion have become more available and as the stigma formerly attached to unwed motherhood has lifted, fewer infants have been put up for adoption, making it increasingly difficult for prospective parents to find young children to adopt (see also infertility). In many cases, parents have adopted babies from outside the United States,

particularly South Korea, and Mexico and other Latin American countries, but the increased demand has also been accompanied by black-market adoption arrangements. In 1980 the U.S. Congress passed the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act to give support to foster families who adopt and to families who adopt children with disabilities.

See also foster care, guardian and ward.

See Kornitzer, M. , *Adoption* (2d ed. 1967);

Leavy, M. L. , *Law of Adoption* (3d ed. 1968);

Benet, M. K. , *The Politics of Adoption* (1976);

Bean, P. , ed., *Adoption: Essays in Social Policy, Law, and Sociology* (1984);

Carp, E. W. , *Family Matters: Secrecy and Disclosure in the History of Adoption* (1999).

## **APA**

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## Harvard

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## MLA

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