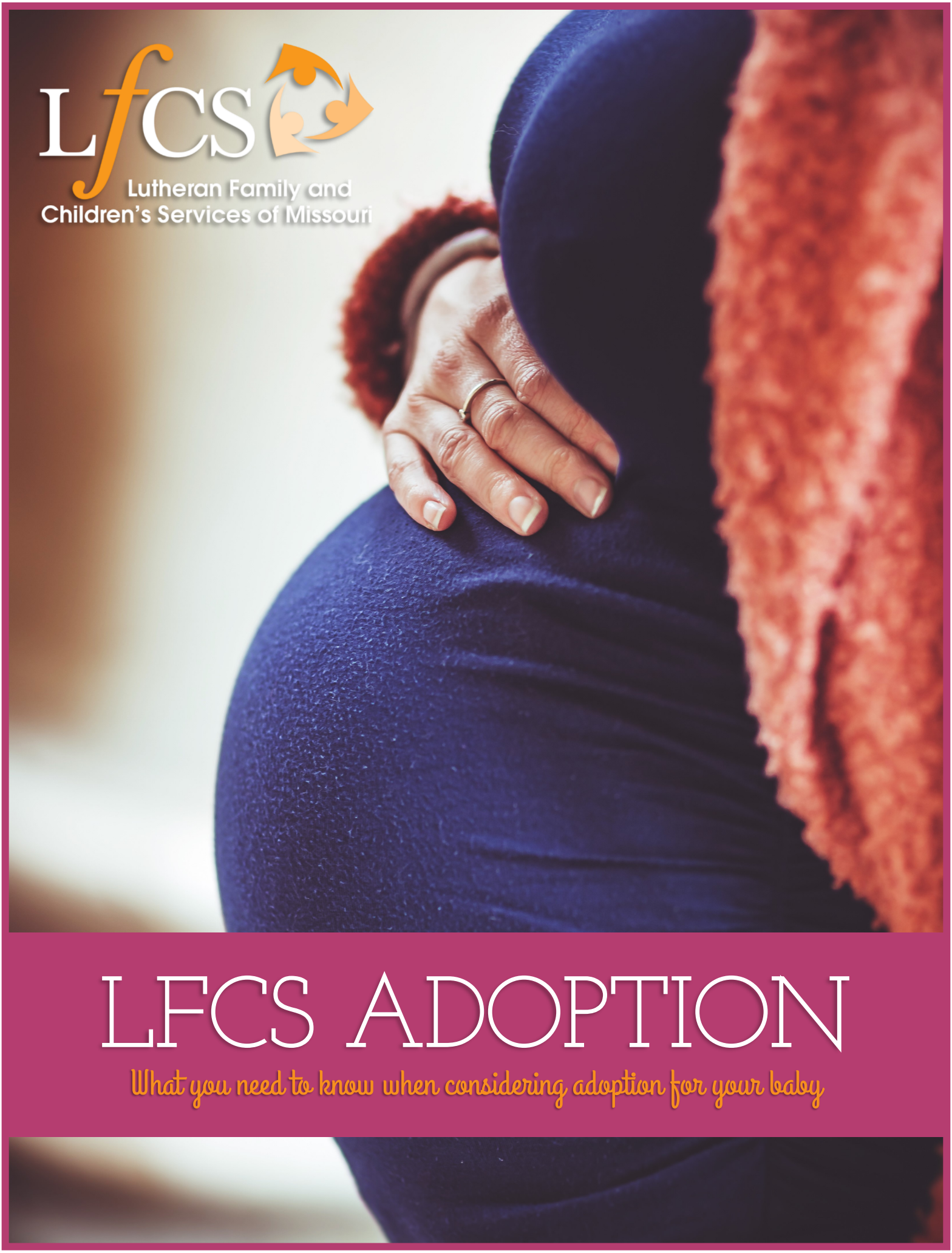


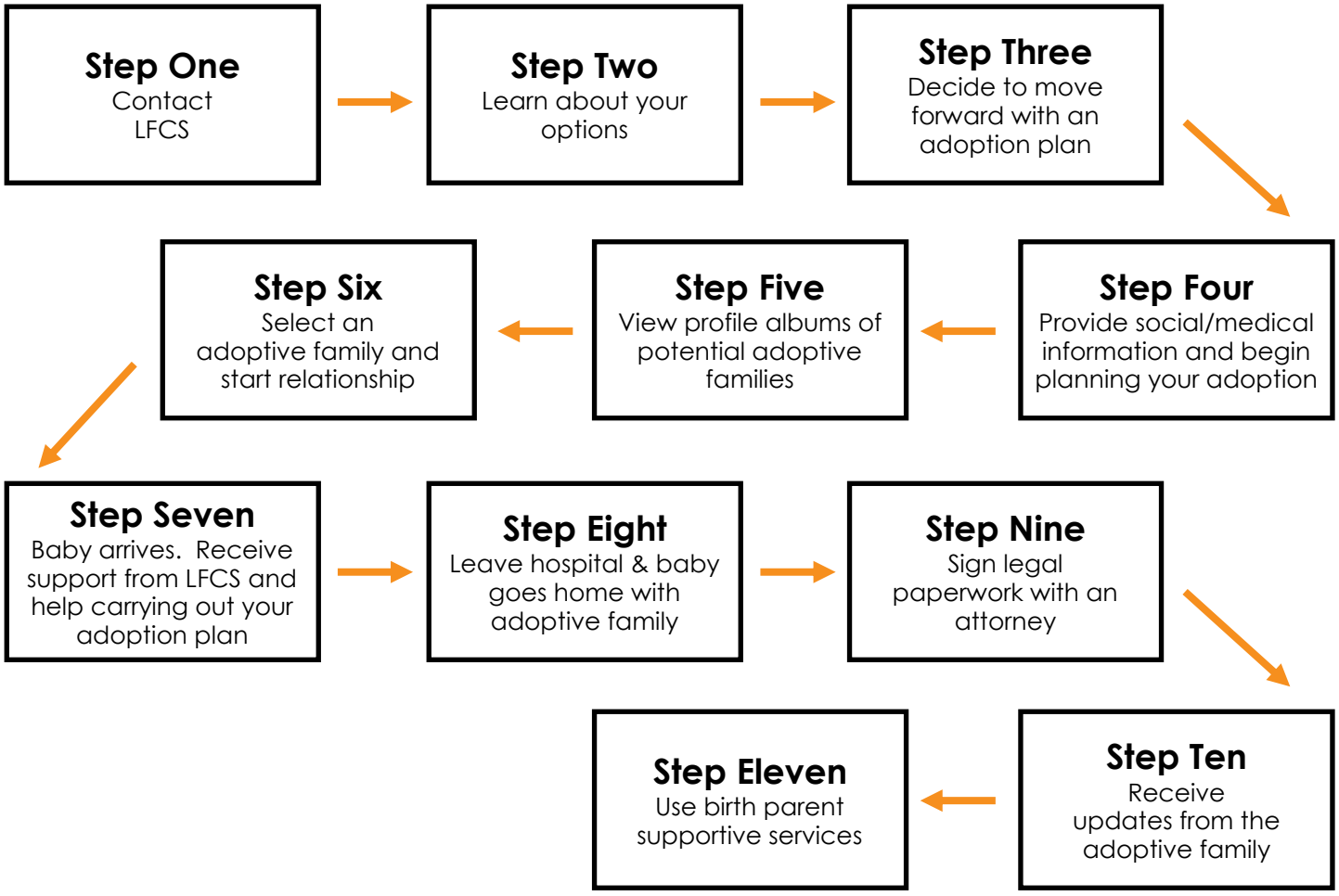
LFCS ADOPTION

What you need to know when considering adoption for your baby

The Adoption Process

Considering adoption is an extremely personal experience, and one that requires accurate information and support so that you can make the best decision for you and your baby. LFCS is committed to providing this to you and your family. The adoption process involves several steps, starting with contacting LFCS. A caseworker will help you throughout your pregnancy, whether you choose to parent your baby or make an adoption plan. We support your needs and wishes throughout the process; as you make your decision, connect with an adoptive family, plan for the hospital, and decide about openness. LFCS will continue to be with you through support groups and referrals.

Map of the Adoption Process



Every adoption is unique. The path does not look the same for everyone. Your caseworker will be with you every step of the way, helping you know what to expect, providing support and guidance without judgment.

Common Questions

Why do most expectant/birth parents make an adoption plan?

Expectant parents make adoption plans for many reasons. Bottom line—they want what is best for their baby, their other children, and their futures. Making an adoption plan is a loving, thoughtful decision for all involved.

Does adoption cost anything for the birth parent(s)?

No. Agency services are free to birth parents, and all legal and medical fees will be covered.

Who selects the parents for my baby?

You do! Families who are adopting through LFCS create an adoption profile album to introduce themselves to you. You can look through the profiles of couples who are approved and waiting to adopt. You choose the family who seems like the best fit for your baby. Your child will grow up with the family you select. You may also ask the agency to make this choice for you if you would prefer.

How can I be sure my baby will be safe with their adoptive family?

Adoptive families are carefully screened and have a thorough evaluation completed. This evaluation, called a "home study," examines a potential adoptive family's background - their relationships, finances, health, criminal records, and their ability to be good parents. After your baby is in the adoptive family's home, they will be monitored regularly by a caseworker to ensure your baby is bonding and thriving.

Common Questions

If I decide to make an adoption plan today, can I still change my mind?

Adoption is a serious decision, and one that will eventually become permanent. You may change your mind at any point up to the time you terminate your parental rights. Termination of parental rights happens when you sign the Consent to Termination of Parental Rights and Adoption document with your attorney. The earliest you can sign that form is 48 hours after the birth of your baby. Once the form is signed, it cannot be undone.

What if I can't decide what I want to do until after I give birth?

LFCS can help you with your adoption plan at any point, even after your baby is born.

When needed, your baby can be cared for by a loving family who helps out short-term. Our respite care families provide a safe, loving home for baby while you work with your caseworker to decide on the best plan for you and your baby.

What if I have already picked an adoptive family for my baby outside of LFCS?

LFCS can still provide you education and support. During the adoption process, you are the top priority. Our services may look a little different than other agencies. We want you to be comfortable with making an adoption plan and the family you choose to parent your baby.

How soon will my baby go home with his/her adoptive parents?

That depends on two things—your plan for placement and what the laws are in your area. Most often, babies go home with the adoptive family after being discharged from the hospital.

Common Questions

Are adoptions open or closed at LFCS?

The level of openness, or amount of contact between the birth family and adoptive family after the adoption, is also something that you may choose. We help you select a family who desires the same level of openness that you would like in the future.

Research shows that everyone in the adoption triad (birth parents, adoptees, and adoptive parents) benefit from openness. All of the adoptive families at LFCS to agree to some level of ongoing contact with the birth family. You can choose to participate or not.

Openness looks different for every adoption. Here are a few common options:

- Somewhat-closed — the birth family chooses not to receive updates
- Semi-open — update letters and visits happen with the help of an LFCS caseworker
- Inclusive — direct contact and more frequent visits between birth and adoptive families

Openness often changes as families build a relationship with one another. And just like any other relationship, this relationship grows and changes over time. Caseworkers at LFCS often support these relationships for life!

How can I make sure adoptive family will keep in contact with me?

You may request to have a Post Adoption Contact Agreement (PACA), which is a legal agreement between the birth parents and adoptive parents about the ongoing contact they will have after the adoption. These are submitted to the court, and have to be approved by a judge to be enforceable.

How do I find an attorney?

LFCS will connect you with an attorney to represent you, at no cost to you. Your attorney will walk you through the legal aspects of the adoption and represent you in the court hearings.

Do I have to go to court or talk to the judge?

It depends on the county where your adoption takes place. In some courts, the judge wants the birth parent(s) to answer questions in person at the first hearing. Other judges allow the birth parent(s)' attorney to represent them. You have the right to attend the court hearing if you prefer.

What about the baby's father? Does he have rights?

Yes, he does have rights. Every birth father's situation is unique. Sometimes he is involved and is part of the planning process. Sometimes he is not. Birth father situations can be complicated, so it is a good idea to talk with your caseworker to learn more about options in your particular circumstances.

Common Questions

What are birth parent expenses?

This is financial support for typical living costs, like rent and utilities, during pregnancy, adoption planning, and six weeks after birth, when needed. We report this assistance to the judge, and there are some rules we have to follow. Your caseworker can talk with you about the ways LFCS can help meet your needs.

Am I stuck with my adoption plan if I have already received help with some of my expenses?

LFCS is committed to helping you reach your goals without pressure. Any assistance provided to you in no way requires that you place your child for adoption.

What happens after the adoption?

Your caseworker will stay in contact with you and help you follow up on the goals you set during your pregnancy. They will also help you cope with your feelings about the adoption, including the grief and loss that is normal to feel. We also invite you to participate in Birth Mothers Support Services offered by LFCS.

What is the Birth Mothers Support Group?

LFCS has a private Facebook group where birth mothers can connect and get support from other birth mothers, who truly understand what they are experiencing. Both in-person and online support group meetings and activities are also announced on this page.

How can I find out more?

First, contact an LFCS caseworker. They will provide you information with no pressure that is specific to your unique situation. Our #1 goal is to give you what you need to make the best decision for you and your family.

You can also:

- Check out Brave Love https://www.bravelove.org/
- Read this article, "Are You Pregnant and Thinking About Adoption?" https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/f_pregna.pdf
- Ask LFCS to connect you to a birth mother who is willing to share her story with you
- Watch this video, "Annie's Story" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6Xu0OEljuQ
- Borrow these books from LFCS
  - "*The Open-Hearted Way to an Open Adoption*" by Lori Holden
  - "*To Have and Not to Hold*" by Lorri Antosz Benson
- Start a list of questions to ask your caseworker that you or your support people have

Why LFCS?

No Pressure—A Social Services Approach

LFCS is more than an adoption agency, which means we can serve pregnant women regardless of the options they are considering or choose.

Our first goal is to help you make an informed plan. Whatever decision you make — or even if you change your mind — we can continue to serve you.

Individual Focus

Expectant parents and adoptive parents who come to LFCS have separate caseworkers focused on their unique needs. While we have a team approach in our adoption program, each client is supported individually.

Local Offices

Our caseworkers have offices around the state and can travel to you! We provide in-person services where you feel comfortable. We can provide you with support at appointments, the hospital, with attorneys, and other times when it is nice to have someone in your corner. Our caseworkers are also knowledgeable about our communities and the resources available to help you meet your needs.

Matching Late in Pregnancy

Many agencies match expectant mothers to adoptive families as soon as they come to the agency. Women might make their plan after just learning of their pregnancy or before they know and understand their options in adoption.

LFCS matches much later in the pregnancy, after women have had many opportunities to make sure adoption is truly the best option for herself and her baby.

Support After Placement

LFCS believes that each birth parent we serve is a client for life. We continue to support birth parents after the placement of their child, with grief and loss, help managing openness, or other needs related to their child's adoption. Birth mothers can also connect with each other through LFCS for on-going peer support.

Lutheran Family and Children's Services of Missouri

Call us for more information at 1-866-326-5327.
You can reach us evenings, weekends, and holidays at 1-800-785-8546.

Visit us online at lfcsmo.org.

Contact your local LFCS Office to schedule an appointment and learn more.

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Saint Louis, MO 63132
(314) 787-5100

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Kansas City, MO 64138
(866) 326-5327

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