ADOPTION INQUIRY INFORMATION GUIDE

The First Step Toward Your Forever Family Through
Lutheran Family and Children's Services of Missouri



Why Choose LFCS for Your Adoption?

Adoption agencies vary in how they support adoptive families and expectant parents.
Here's what sets LFCS apart:

- **Dedicated, individualized support**. Adoptive families are paired with an Adoption Program Coordinator who guides them through every step of the journey. Expectant parents work with their own dedicated caseworker, providing personalized support for everyone involved.

- **Transparent adoption costs**. Agency fees are based on a sliding scale determined early in the process, providing predictable costs for families. We maintain low, standardized birth parent expenses to help keep adoption costs manageable.

- **Trusted professional resources**. We connect families with experienced adoption attorneys and financial assistance resources tailored to their needs.

- **Education and lifelong support**. We provide adoption education, training and ongoing support before, during and after placement.

LFCS provides expectant parents with unbiased support and options. Women who receive crisis pregnancy and parenting services are never pressured to choose adoption. Those who decide adoption is the right choice may select a home study-approved adoptive family through LFCS and receive guidance throughout the process.

Because LFCS provides agency-funded support during pregnancy, adoption costs remain more affordable while expectant mothers receive care regardless of the path they choose.

LFCS empowers Missouri children and families to build brighter futures through mental health counseling, parenting education, foster care, adoption, early childhood development and community prevention services.

A Different Approach to Adoption:

A Comprehensive Social Services Model
LFCS is more than an adoption agency. We empower families through adoption, crisis pregnancy and parenting services, mental health counseling, foster care, early childhood development and other family support programs. Our comprehensive approach ensures expectant parents and adoptive families receive individualized support from dedicated caseworkers and a collaborative care team.

Thoughtful Matching Process
Unlike agencies that match families early in pregnancy, LFCS typically matches later, giving expectant parents time to explore all options to make an informed decision. Throughout the process, expectant parents receive counseling, support and resources, regardless of whether they choose adoption or parenting. This approach helps reduce disrupted adoption plans and provides greater confidence for everyone involved.

Affordable Adoption Costs
As a statewide social services agency, LFCS can access funding that supports expectant parents during pregnancy and after delivery. This funding reduces reliance on adoptive family payments for birth parent expenses.

Adoption Fee Protection
If an adoption plan does not move forward, your adoption fees and approved birth parent expenses are not forfeited. Families remain eligible for future matching opportunities without restarting the process.

Diverse Waiting Families
LFCS maintains a diverse pool of prospective adoptive families representing a variety of family structures, backgrounds and life experiences. This allows expectant parents to choose the family they believe is the best fit for their child and their adoption plan.

Domestic Agency Adoption Through LFCS

Domestic agency adoption is the most common type of adoption at LFCS. We match expectant parents making an adoption plan with approved waiting families and support families throughout the process, from home study through finalization and beyond. Families must complete an application and approved home study before being considered for a match. Agency fees support the services provided throughout the adoption journey.

LFCS Eligibility Requirements

Prospective adoptive parents must:

- Be 25 to 45 years of age
- Be legally married for at least two years, if applying as a couple
- Have at least one applicant who is a U.S. citizen and Missouri resident
- Have no children under age 1 living in the home
- Have a min household income of $50,000, plus $10,000 for each child currently living in the home, as reported on Line 9 of Form 1040 (required with application when invited to join the program)
- If there is a history of serious physical or mental health condition, the applicant(s) have a good health standing for 3 years based on a physician's assessment
- Have medical insurance that covers each family member and will cover the child at birth/placement
- Have a life insurance policy to support the family should anything happen to either parent
- Accept an open or semi-open communication agreement with the birth family
- Agree to no corporal punishment

Other Adoption Services at LFCS

Independent or Other Agency Adoption
Some families make private connections with expectant parents or work with another adoption agency or professional. LFCS can provide adoption support services, including home studies, post-placement supervision and guidance throughout the process, for an additional fee.

Embryo Adoption
LFCS supports families interested in embryo adoption, which involves adopting embryos created through in vitro fertilization (IVF) and donated by families who have completed their own fertility journey. Contact LFCS to learn more about this option.

Intercountry Adoption
Intercountry, or international, adoption involves adopting a child from outside the United States. While LFCS does not place children for international adoption, we provide required home studies and post-placement supervision for families working with an international placing agency.





The Adoption Process

The adoption process involves multiple steps, beginning with an application and home study, which typically takes two to three months. Once approved, families are added to the match list and typically wait 12 to 18 months to be matched with a baby. LFCS provides guidance, case management and support throughout the entire adoption journey.

___ **Learn more and apply**. Attend an informational appointment with LFCS, determine your adoption needs and submit an application when invited to do so.

___ **Complete a home study evaluation**. Families complete the required home study evaluation and approval process.

___ **Create your family profile**. With guidance from your Adoption Program Coordinator, families create a profile album to introduce themselves to expectant parents considering adoption.

___ **Review matching opportunities**. Expectant parents work with their caseworker to create a matching profile outlining their adoption plan and the needs of their expected child. When a situation may be a good fit, eligible families decide whether they would like their profile presented.

___ **Expectant parents select a family**. Expectant parents review family profiles and select the family they feel is the best fit for their adoption plan.

___ **Begin a relationship**. Expectant parents and adoptive parents meet, begin communication, and begin planning for birth and placement.

___ **Placement**. At the time of the child's placement, the Adoption Program Coordinator and Birth Parent Caseworker support the placement process at the hospital or local office.

___ **Birth parent consent and transfer of custody**. After the baby is at least 48 hours old, birth parents may formally consent to the adoption with the assistance of an attorney. Families then attend the first court hearing, known as the Transfer of Custody hearing.

___ **Post-placement supervision**. Typically, the Adoption Program Coordinator completes a minimum of three required visits over six months to provide support and fulfill court mandated post-placement supervision requirements prior to adoption finalization.

___ **Adoption finalization**. After post-placement supervision is complete, families attend the final court hearing, known as the Adoption Finalization hearing, where the adoption is legally finalized.

Understanding Adoption Fees
A Transparent Approach to Adoption Costs

LFCS works to keep adoption costs as affordable as possible by using a sliding scale to determine agency fees. An Adoption Program Coordinator can discuss the specific expenses you can expect based on your individual circumstances. In general, adoption costs may include:

Adoption Expenses

Application Fee

- $200 application fee

Agency Fees

Agency fees are based on a sliding scale and support the services provided throughout your adoption journey, including:

- Home study services
- Support and counseling for birth parents
- Matching support and guidance
- Support at the hospital and during court proceedings
- Birth parent expenses
- Post-placement supervision
- Ongoing support after adoption finalization
- Overall program coordination and expenses

LFCS Sliding Scale Fee Schedule

Annual Household Income	Fee
$50,000 – $ 60,000	$ 22,000
$60,001 – $ 70,000	$ 23,500
$70,001 – $ 80,000	$ 25,000
$80,001 – $ 90,000	$ 26,500
$90,001 – $ 100,000	$ 28,000
$100,001 – $ 110,000	$ 29,500
$110,001 – $ 120,000	$ 31,000
$120,001 – $ 130,000	$ 32,500
$130,001 – $ 140,000	$ 34,000
$140,001 – $ 150,000	$ 35,500
$150,001 – and above	$ 37,000

Additional Expenses

Agency fees do not include education, travel and lodging, medical or legal expenses. Additional costs may include:

- Educational webinars: approximately $200
- Profile albums: cost varies
- Fingerprint background checks: approximately $43 per person
- Legal expenses: approximately $4,000 to $7,000 for a typical adoption

Note: Many families apply for grants to help offset adoption expenses. Your Adoption Program Coordinator can provide information about available grant opportunities once you are added to the match list.

The Adoption Constellation: Understanding Openness in Adoption

The Adoption Triad or Constellation includes three important parties: the child, birth family and adoptive family. Each plays a vital role in the adoption relationship, and research supports openness as beneficial to everyone involved.

LFCS requires the following minimum level of openness:

- An update letter and photo during the first week after placement
- Monthly update letters and photos for the first six months (many families continue updates through the first year)
- Annual update letters and photos until the child turns 18

Your Adoption Program Coordinator will help guide and manage openness throughout the adoption journey, often in partnership with the birth parent's caseworker.

The majority of adoptions today include some type of contact among the adoption constellation.

LFCS adoption staff is committed to supporting healthy communication throughout the adoption journey.

Ready to Take the Next Step?

Learn more about becoming an LFCS adoptive family by completing our pre-application. This form helps us learn more about your family and begins the conversation with our Adoption Team.

START YOUR PRE-APPLICATION

Contact LFCS:

Missouri statewide
intake@lfcs.org
1-866-326-LFCS (5327)

Frequently Asked Questions

How long does the adoption process take?
The home study process typically takes two to three months. Once approved and added to the match list, families generally wait 12 to 18 months to be matched, although timing varies based on many factors.

Are adoptions open or closed at LFCS?
Research shows that openness benefits everyone involved in the adoption relationship. This can range from mediated updates to inclusive contact and may change over time as relationships develop. We help navigate and manage openness agreements that best support the child, birth family and adoptive family.

Why do expectant parents make an adoption plan?
Expectant parents choose adoption for many reasons, including personal circumstances, limited resources, health challenges or a desire to provide a different future for their child. Each family's situation is unique, but all share a commitment to making a thoughtful and loving decision for their child.

Can I choose a baby's gender, race or other characteristics?
During the home study process, adoptive parents are approved based on the characteristics and needs of a child they feel prepared to support. LFCS considers a family's ability to meet a child's needs, including age, racial and cultural background, and health or mental health history. Families have the opportunity to review each matching situation and decide whether it is the right fit. Adoptive families should understand that there is no guarantee of a "perfect" adoption situation. Children placed through adoption may have experienced challenges such as prenatal exposure, medical needs, trauma, learning differences or other factors that require ongoing support. LFCS provides education and resources to help families prepare to meet a child's needs throughout their lifetime.

Can I just adopt a baby by becoming a foster parent?
While infants and toddlers do enter foster care, they are often part of sibling groups or have other unique needs. The primary goal of foster care is reunification, whenever possible, by supporting children and helping birth families address the circumstances that led to placement.

How do I find an attorney?
LFCS works with experienced adoption attorneys throughout Missouri and can provide recommendations based on your location and adoption needs. These attorneys understand Missouri adoption laws and local court processes.

Can I use my own attorney?
LFCS recommends working with an attorney who has specific adoption experience and is listed with the Academy of Adoption and Assisted Reproduction Attorneys. Using an attorney without adoption experience may lead to delays, additional costs or complications during the adoption process. Find the list of adoption attorneys.

How much does the legal portion of an adoption process cost?
Legal costs vary based on several factors, including location, attorney fees and the complexity of the adoption. In general, families can expect legal expenses of approximately $4,000 to $7,000, which may include attorney fees, court filing fees, birth parent attorney fees and guardian ad litem fees.

Can birth parents take a child back after adoption?
Once an adoption is finalized, the adoptive family has permanent legal custody of the child. Before finalization, birth parents must provide legal consent to the adoption. Adoption disruptions after finalization are extremely rare.

What do I tell my child about their birth family?
Research supports openness and age-appropriate conversations about adoption and birth family connections. Children benefit from understanding their adoption story and having access to information about their background and identity. LFCS encourages adoptive families to support a child's questions and needs throughout their development.

LFCS
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