

Dear prospective adoptive family,

If you are like most families, you are turning to adoption to fulfill your dream of becoming a parent. The question most frequently asked to us is, **“Can you really adopt a newborn from Ohio?”**

The answer is simple. Gentle Care has a wonderful history of placing over 1,700 healthy newborns with loving families. We have also helped place special needs newborns with special families. We have been completing adoptions for over 23 years and our dedication to our clients has helped us grow into the most successful adoption agency in Ohio.

We accomplished this by our constant commitment to improving our adoption services to our birth mothers and adoptive families. We feel this focus on improving our services, helped us grow with our clients and stay a step ahead of other adoption professionals.

Domestic and international adoption presents every family with a wealth of options and challenges. It is important for you to find a professional who will help guide you through the adoption process; a professional to answer any questions and address concerns you may experience along the way. Finding a quality professional is the most important decision you will ever make, simply because that organization will help you begin or add to your family.

Should you choose Gentle Care, you will find an experienced and dedicated staff willing to guide you through the world of domestic adoption. Please find on the following page steps of the adoption process.

We wish you well in your search to fulfill your dream. After reviewing our adoption information, should you feel we can help you complete that dream, our staff would be honored to work with you.

Sincerely,

The Staff of Adoption by Gentle Care

Steps to Join Adoption by Gentle Care

1. Read over this initial packet and call us with any questions.
2. Research any subsidies should you need/want them to assist with adoption fees.
3. Send in the enclosed application called JFS 01691 Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Application for Child Placement form and return it with a fee of \$150.00 (non-refundable). **It is an application on white paper and is six (6) pages in length.**
4. Upon receipt of the application, we will contact you acknowledging receipt. You will receive an invitation to the next available Group and Assessment and Seminar meetings approximately six (6) weeks prior to the scheduled date. These will provide a more detailed explanation of how the domestic adoption process works.
5. After completion of the required training, we will begin the home study process, which is handled by one of our social workers. They will meet with you and any others who currently reside in your home. It is an assessment of the home environment and your suitability to provide a stable, secure, and loving home for a child. In some cases, families have already completed the home study process. In those cases, we will simply need to review the home study to make certain it complies with Ohio's regulations and standards.
6. We will begin the adoptive family profile process with you; this is handled by our personal graphic design studio, Digital Graphiti. With your assistance, they will arrange photographs and general non-identifying information regarding your family into a professional profile. This profile is how the majority of our birth mothers select the adoptive family with whom they would like to place their baby.
7. We will work with you to fill out our adoption planning questionnaire. It is a series of questions we ask you, so we know what type of situations you are comfortable with in your adoption. For example, are you comfortable if the birth mother smoked during her pregnancy? This questionnaire will not cover every possible situation, but it does provide us with a good idea of your comfort level, so we can most appropriately circulate your profile.
8. After the above steps are completed, we will send you an activation agreement; this is when you will formally decide to join Gentle Care. It is at this point that you will pay our activation fee. This fee is primarily used by us to promote Gentle Care's services to birth mothers considering adoption.
9. You will then be placed in our pool of waiting adoptive families. As birth mothers contact us, we compare their background and desires with your adoption planning questionnaire. We then share matching families with our birth mothers. They decide which family will adopt their baby from the matching families profiles shared with them.

Advantages of Adoption by Gentle Care

1. One of the most experienced adoption staffs in the United States. This allows us to share our intimate adoption experience with our clients thus making the adoption process much easier for our clients.
2. Experience in placing over 1,700 newborns with Ohio families. Our proven and unmatched track record gives clients a strong feeling of confidence because of our past success.
3. We focus primarily on women facing an unplanned pregnancy in Ohio. We have spent 23 years building solid relationships with health care professionals who come in contact with pregnant mothers facing an unplanned pregnancy. These professionals consistently turn to Gentle Care because we provide extraordinary and heartfelt services to all of our birth mothers.
4. We will review with you, in detail, your adoption planning questionnaire to provide you with our assessment as to how your responses and family dynamics could affect your waiting time.
5. Ohio has some of the best adoption laws in the United States and most adoptive families find this security comforting.
6. Since we primarily work with birth mothers in Ohio, adoptive families enjoy this convenience as they are not forced to travel across the United States or travel to another country to adopt a child.
7. By concentrating our efforts in Ohio; we have built a network of dedicated and qualified staff members across the state effectively allowing us to service birth mothers and adoptive families wherever they may live.
8. We can and do work with families from other states and many come to us because of our solid reputation and the advantages Ohio laws offers to them. Due to our extensive experience, we welcome the opportunity to work with adoptive families from all over the United States.
9. We are a full service adoption agency. Full service means we facilitate the entire adoption process for you. Most families prefer an expert to handle the entire process for them. We do, however, offer quality independent adoption services if you need a home study or have located a birth mother on your own.

Commonly Asked Questions

How long is your waiting time?

Waiting times vary with domestic adoption because birth mothers select the family they would like to adopt their baby.

What factors affect a family's waiting time?

Over our years of experience, we have determined there are essentially four (4) factors that can affect your waiting time; they are as follows:

1. The amount of birth mothers an adoption professional reaches compared to the number of adoptive families on their list.
2. The birth mother's selection of a family. This is, obviously, an impossible variable for any professional to predict.
3. The degree of openness a family has on their adoption planning questionnaire. Obviously, the more adoption situations with which you are comfortable, the more times we can share your family profile with inquiring birth mothers.
4. The quality of the profile. In our research, we have found birth mother's prefer our profiles because they are professional, attractively designed, and easy to read. Our profiles provide us a distinct advantage over other adoption professionals.

What factors typically cause the waiting time to be much longer than the average?

Since birth mothers select the adoptive family, we feel it is important to share the feedback we have received from birth mothers. The following situations are appealing to few birth mothers:

- Single parents.
- If any parent is older in age.
- If families have more than one child living in their home.
- Families who do not provide good photographs and information on their profile.

If you fall into one of the categories above, you will want to talk with our adoption specialists to determine how much the above factors could affect your waiting time. It should be noted that should you fall into one of the above categories, it does not prevent you from joining Gentle Care. We feel obligated, as adoption professionals, to disclose any feedback received from birth mothers.

What is MEPA?

It stands for Multiethnic Placement Act. It is a federal act that was primarily created to prevent discrimination in adoption. Before the act, some adoption professionals would only place African American children with African American families or Caucasian children with Caucasian families. These professionals refused to look at the best interest of the child and rather looked at a child's race first and foremost. The act was

intended to make sure adoption professionals, when deciding to place a child for adoption, do not discriminate against a child or prospective adoptive family based on any forms of discrimination including but not limited to race. Fortunately, MEPA does not prevent government programs or charitable organizations from providing subsidies for families wishing to adopt children who may be more difficult to place.

What happens if I am discriminated against?

If you feel an adoption professional in Ohio may have discriminated against you, we have enclosed a form that you can submit to the state of Ohio. They will review the complaint and decide if it is something they should look into.

Does Adoption by Gentle Care work with families and children from all races?

Yes.

What is an average waiting time?

Without knowing your family dynamics and your responses to our adoption planning questionnaire, it is difficult to estimate. We found, however, approximately 80% of our adoptive families wait 12-18 months for a Caucasian child. If you are open to other races, the waiting time can be less although it does depend on your adoption planning questionnaire responses. We will help you complete your adoption planning questionnaire and that, coupled with your family dynamics, will allow us to point out any areas that might positively or negatively impact your waiting time. This will allow you to have a full understanding of waiting times before you formally join Gentle Care.

Are there any subsidies or financial assistance that we can get to help with adoption fees?

There are organizations that typically help lower to middle class families with adoption costs. The one we highly recommend is American Adoptions, whose gift application form we have enclosed with this packet. Their main focus is to help families who are interested in adopting minority children, special needs, and other unique situations. You can submit an application and they will provide a response to you usually within 30 days, if you are approved. There are other organizations beyond American Adoptions who help families with their adoption costs. Below are some other resources.

Adoption.com:

State of Ohio Adoption Subsidy Profile

Adoption Subsidy Advocates: Adoption Policy Resource

Adoption Subsidy: Negotiating and Renegotiating Your Child's...

Adoption Subsidy:

- Federal Adoption Subsidy Programs Special Needs SSI or AFDC
- NACAC Subsidy Fact Sheets
- International Adoptions and Adoption Subsidies

In-Family Adoptions:

- Federal and state adoption assistance/adoption subsidy programs services and financial resources to the adoptive family

Practical Guide to Adoption Subsidies (e-book)

Adoption Subsidy-Adoption Week e-Magazine Article

How does Adoption by Gentle Care differ from other adoption professionals in Ohio?

Each professional in Ohio has a different philosophy. Our philosophy is to be the best adoption agency in Ohio. We have led other adoption professionals in this quest for over 23 years. Many of our programs and services are often mimicked by our competitors and we feel imitation is a great form of flattery. You may read more about our advantages in the section entitled "Advantages of Adoption By Gentle Care".

What is the home study process?

The Home Study is a cooperative effort between Gentle Care and the applicants to assess the applicant's ability to parent a child successfully. (For details about the process see the Home Study Procedure Outline.) The Home Study consists of two meetings, which are usually held in the applicant's home. Once all documents have been received and requirements met, the Home Study process will be complete and the applicants will be notified by letter regarding final approval. The Home Study is valid only in Ohio for two (2) years from approval. Additional updates to the Home Study must be completed at least once every two (2) years unless you are using the home study to adopt outside of Ohio, in which case you will need it updated annually. A home study which is more than six (6) years old cannot be updated.

An adoptive couple may already have an approved home study from another agency, whether through an Ohio agency or out of state agency. If so, this home study will be reviewed by Gentle Care to ensure that all Ohio adoption regulations and requirements are met. Once reviewed and approved by Gentle Care, the home study will be treated in exactly the same manner as if the agency itself had completed it and will be used as an integral part of matching the adoptive couple with the prospective birth parent(s). Specifically, Gentle Care will ensure that a home study from another agency, whether in state or out-of-state, is in full compliance with all Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) regulations.

Gentle Care works with adoptive couples in every county and community across Ohio. To complete the home study process, the agency utilizes a number of qualified Licensed Social Workers (all of whom are state certified Adoption Assessors), who themselves are located in various communities throughout Ohio. Agency Social Workers go directly to the home of each adoptive couple, wherever the couple may reside in the state, to personally meet with them to complete the home study. Each Social Worker uses the same procedures when conducting the home study, so that adoptive couples are assured of receiving the same thorough home study process, no matter where they may reside in Ohio.

As noted previously, initial home study fees are \$1,300. Home Study Update fees (where Gentle Care completed the first home study) are as follows:

\$800 Home Study Update if a placement has occurred

\$250 Home Study Update if a placement has not occurred

PRE-FINALIZATION ADOPTION SERVICES

1. Gentle Care will provide Pre-Finalization services to the adoptive parents and the child from the date of placement until the issuance of the Final Decree of Adoption. This Pre-Finalization period can be no less than six (6) months from the date of placement. A social worker will make a home visit with the adoptive family no later than seven (7) days following placement and shall make face-to-face visits not more than every 30 days apart during the Pre-Finalization period. All Post Placement visits will occur in the home. In a two parent family, both parents and the child must be present for each visit.

The visits made by the social worker with the adoptive family are to ensure the baby is being loved and cared for, and the adoptive parents are adjusting to their new role. During these visits the social worker offers counseling, support, and makes an assessment as to the success of the placement.

2. Adoptive parents are required to send monthly photographs and letters to Adoption by Gentle Care for the birth parent(s) for one (1) year after placement and twice per year afterwards until the child reaches the age of 18. We also ask that you send photographs and letters within the first week of placement. These pictures will be sent to the birth parent(s) at their request.
3. Gentle Care will refer the adoptive parents to an attorney experienced in obtaining Final Decrees of Adoption through Franklin County Probate Court, and will assist in providing the necessary documents to the attorney. All finalizations will occur in Franklin County. If finalization needs to occur outside of Franklin County, the adoptive parents must contact the Executive Director prior to placement for approval.

POST-FINALIZATION ADOPTION SERVICES

1. Gentle Care shall remain available to birth parents, adoptive families and adoptees to provide counseling, education or consultation on adoption issues after the Final Decree of Adoption has been issued. In situations where Gentle Care is unable to provide the appropriate service needed, the agency shall make referrals to agencies or individuals specializing in adoption issues.
2. Gentle Care will continue to facilitate communication between birth parent(s) and adoptive parents.
3. Adoptive families will be invited to the Gentle Care annual picnics held in Columbus and Cleveland, Ohio.