

# ADOPTION: BASIC FACTS

## What is adoption?

Adoption is defined as taking a child into one's family through legal means and raising that child as one's own. In essence, adopting a child means pledging to raise the child with all the rights and responsibilities you would have with your biological children. The legal result is that the child ceases to be the legal obligation of the natural, or biological, parents, becoming instead the responsibility of the adoptive parents, as though they bore the child.

## How Children May be Placed for Adoption:

Agency Placement: The procedure for adoption used by licensed adoption agencies.

Direct Placement or Independent Adoption: The natural parents place the child directly into the home of the adoptive parents. No agency is used.

Step-Parent Adoption: The step-parent of a child adopts the step-child. The child must have been the biological offspring of the step-parent's spouse prior to marriage.

## Summary of Basic Adoption Procedures:

To adopt a child, you must file a petition with the court. In Virginia, petitions are filed in circuit court. Couples are advised to maintain an off-post attorney to proceed with an adoption. As a general rule, adoption procedures are handled by the local court in the county where the adoption is to take place, and there usually is a filing fee required with the petition.