

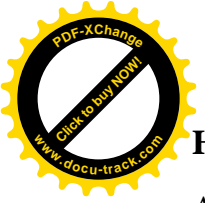
## Adoption

Adopting a baby or child can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life. There are thousands of babies, children, and adolescents in the United States and around the world who need a family.

Children who need families range from newborns to teens. For whatever reason, they are unable to be raised by their biological parents, and they need and deserve loving, committed, and permanent families.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of people around the world choose to pursue adoption for a variety of reasons. Some people have simply always wanted to adopt for as long as they can remember; some come to the choice of adoption because they are unable to carry a pregnancy to term; some have family connections that bring them an adoption opportunity (e.g., stepparent or relative adoption); and others may choose to add to their families through adoption for various other reasons.





## Hiring an adoption attorney

Adoption is a wonderful option for expanding your family. Working with an adoption attorney will help ensure that your adoption proceeds smoothly. An experienced California adoption attorney will:

- Provide an unbiased explanation of California adoption methods and resources, helping you to develop a legally secure plan that is specifically tailored to your needs;
- Explain your rights and California adoption laws;
- Assess the risks involved, including:
- Determine what costs are legally permissible and;
- Work to ensure that the birth parents' rights are legally terminated before placement is finalized;
- Review and negotiate adoption agency contracts to help ensure that your interests are served;
- Clarify your options for post-placement arrangements, if any, with birth parent(s) and draft or review an agreement to help ensure that your best interests, as well as those of the child, are served.



## **What Sets Us Apart?**

What sets us apart is the personal attention and professionalism with which we treat our clients. While each of our clients is unique, we approach them all with the same core values, beliefs and goals. Further, we want to establish a long term relationship with our clients advising them in any future legal needs they have that may impact their lives.

## **Types of Adoption**

### **Stepparent Adoption**

If you are in a marriage that includes a child from a previous relationship, you and your spouse may be considering adoption as a means of assuming sole legal responsibility for the welfare of the child. Stepparent adoption in California is a legal means of allowing spouses, to assume legal and financial responsibility of a child.

### **Consent of the Other Parent**

If you want to adopt a stepchild in California, you must have the consent of both your spouse and the child's other parent. By giving his or her consent, the non-custodial parent



ives up all rights and responsibilities, including child support.

In instances when a non-custodial, biological parent will not consent an experienced California adoption attorney can begin the process to terminate the non-custodial parent's parental rights if applicable under the law.

We can assist if you live in California and would like to legally adopt your spouse's child or children. We terminate the legal parents' rights, coordinate the social worker and home study, and complete all necessary legal work, including court appearances.

**Requirements:**

The State of California will not approve a stepparent adoption unless you have been married to the child's parent for 1 year or longer.

**Why adopt stepchildren?**

Does your stepchild consider you a parent? Are you the one who helps with homework, talks to the doctor, and claps at games and recitals? If something happened to your spouse, would you still want to be part of your stepchild's life?

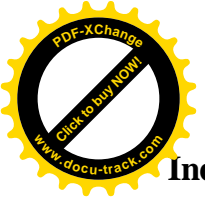


You have, as a stepparent in California, no legal rights. If your spouse became incapacitated, died, or you became divorced from him or her, the court could award custody of your stepchild to anyone—possibly a relative who has not ever been part of that child’s life. You could also be prevented from ever seeing the child again. Through stepparent adoption, your legal relationship with your child will become identical to that of a birth parent and child.

**Stepfathers:** Stepfathers choose to adopt a stepchild to protect the child’s rights, as well as the stepfather’s rights and to strengthen the bond between father and child and the family unit.

You may be the only dad a child has known—but you aren’t the biological father. For many stepfathers, the answer is clear: Adopt the stepchild and become the child’s legal father.

**The Law Office of Dennis M. Schuster** supports blended families, protecting parent-child relationships through stepparent adoption. We will be happy to meet with you to explain how California law applies to your situation and how our experienced adoption attorneys can help your family.



## **Independent Adoption**

Thousands of newborns are placed with families each year through private adoption. If you choose to adopt a newborn, you'll need an experienced adoption attorney to guide your way.

In a typical independent adoption in California, the prospective parents take an active role in identifying a birth mother, usually by networking, advertising, or by using the Internet.

### **The benefits**

In this country, and likewise in the State of California, at least as many newborns are placed each year through independent adoption as through agency adoption. While it is difficult to say why birth parents might prefer independent adoption, they do report some reasons consistently, including: a perception that agencies are bureaucratic; a desire to play an active role in selection of the adoptive parents; and a desire for the child to go directly into the physical custody of the adoptive parents rather than into temporary foster care.



In independent adoptions in California, it is common for the adoptive parents to be present at the hospital, even at the time of birth. In addition, the adoptive parents typically can help care for the child in the hospital. It is also common for the child to be discharged from the hospital directly to the physical care of the adoptive parents.

## **How it works**

In independent adoptions in California, it is common for the adoptive parents to be present at the hospital, even at the time of birth. In addition, the adoptive parents typically can help care for the child in the hospital. It is also common for the child to be discharged from the hospital directly to the physical care of the adoptive parents.

## **Open Independent Adoption Greater Openness in Adoption**

Until the late 1970s, agencies generally selected adoptive families for children without consulting birth parents. Current practice is much different. In many agency adoptions, and in virtually all of independent adoptions, birth parents are actively involved in selecting the adoptive families for their children.



has also become increasingly common for birth and adoptive families to have some form of direct contact after placement. This practice is called "open adoption," but the degree of openness can vary significantly. Birth and adoptive parents may meet before the adoption is finalized and have no further contact, or the families may maintain some level of ongoing contact throughout the child's life, such as exchanging photos or letters or having face-to-face meetings. In a study of over one thousand 1988 - 1989 California adoptions, adoptive parents had met birth parents before the adoption in 62% of private agency adoptions and 59% of independent adoptions.

### **Grandparent Adoption**

More and more frequently, grandparents, aunts and uncles are adopting within their family. The rights of grandparents and relatives to adopt has become an important issue in modern family law. If you are seeking to adopt your grandchild or minor relative, our experienced California adoption attorneys can work with you through the adoption process. We can file the necessary documents to terminate the legal parents' rights if necessary, coordinate the social worker and home study, and complete all necessary legal work including court appearances.





## **Domestic Partner Adoptions**

We can assist if you would like to legally adopt your domestic partner's child or children. We will work to terminate the legal parents' right if necessary, coordinate the social worker and home study, and complete all necessary legal work, including court appearances.

### **Adult Adoptions**

California law provides that an adult person can legally adopt another adult person as long as the adoptee is at least 10 years younger. The adoptee's parent's rights do not need to be terminated. Often, people choose to adopt an adult stepchild, relative, or someone close to them, either for emotional or inheritance purposes.

*The Law Office of Dennis M. Schuster will be happy to meet with you to explain how California law applies to your situation and how our experienced adoption attorneys can help your family.*



## **Relative Adoptions**

We can assist you in legally adopting a relative who is a minor. We terminate the legal parents' rights, coordinate the social worker and home study, and complete all necessary legal work including court appearances.

## **Re-adoptions of Foreign Adoptions**

Our experienced California adoption attorneys can assist you with filing your adoption papers in California in order to get an American adoption decree and birth certificate, thereby ensuring California jurisdiction for your adoption.

## **What Will This Cost Me?**

### **Los Angeles Adoption Lawyer**

At the Law Office of Dennis M. Schuster, we know you have enough to worry about during this difficult time, and your legal fees shouldn't be one of them. We strive to provide our clients with top-notch consulting and litigation services at highly competitive fees.



After retaining a deposit for the services of our law office, we offer a flexible monthly payment plan for the duration of the relationship. Multiple methods of payment are accepted, including cash, checks, and all major credit cards

Notes:



notes:

