

BRIEF ADOPTION HISTORY

1940s-1960s

Who is being adopted?

In 1944, 42% of adopted children had been born in wedlock. Unmarried mothers made up the majority by the end of the 1950s. Society strongly believed that an unmarried woman should never raise a child alone. Children being adopted were not usually newborns, rather they were usually over one year old. The child often lived in a temporary home prior to adoption.

Who can adopt?

Married couples. Many states had laws requiring children to be adopted by families of the same race and religion as child.

What is the process?

Home study involved interviews at home, references, credit bureau report, and medical exams. The focus was on the child while offering services to the adoptive parents. There was little focus on birthparents.

How long does it take?

Once a child was legally eligible for adoption, a family could adopt the child after a

probationary period of 6 months to one year.

How much does it cost?

In the 40s the cost ranged from \$50 to \$150. By the 50s, the cost could be as high as \$1,400. Many agencies had a sliding fee scale based on income.

What about openness?

Workers advised adoptive parents to talk about adoption as early as possible. Records were permanently sealed, but only 15 states required reporting of adoptions as vital statistics.

1970s-1980s

Who is being adopted?

Newborns of all races were being adopted domestically. The desire of most was a healthy, Caucasian baby.

Approximately 60 couples waited per child.

In 1973, abortion became a legal alternative for pregnant women.

Who can adopt?

Prospective people needed to show financial ability to care for a child. Most agencies insisted that individuals be a minimum of 21 years old. Some

agencies had a maximum infant age but not for special needs.

During this time, single people were allowed to adopt.

What is the process?

Home study involved interviews at home, references, credit bureau report, and medical exams. The focus was on the child while offering services to the adoptive parents. Focus was starting to shift to include birthparents.

How long does it take?

Matching a child with a family was done by the agency. Most families waited at least a year for placement.

How much does it cost?

Adoptions ranged from \$300-\$500. Cost differed depended on where the family lived. Adoption subsidies became available at this time.

What about openness?

Openness was defined as the parties knowing each other. It could include the birth parents and adoptive parents requesting information, pictures, or visits.

1980s-Today

Who is being adopted?

Newborns of all races, infants, and older children are being adopted. Many families seek international adoptions.

Who can adopt?

In this era, adoption is open to almost anyone over age 18. The average age limit for an adoptive couple is 48 for a domestic adoption.

What is the process?

An adoption study is completed with interviews and paperwork. Workers spend time educating the families about a variety of issues. There are extensive background checks and references. Medical reports are also required.

How long does it take?

At most agencies, birthparents choose the family. This can cause the family's length of time to vary. Average wait for a domestic infant is one to two-year.

How much does it cost?

Adoptions can range from \$5,000 to \$20,000 and beyond. Tax credits became available at this time and have now reached \$10,000. Work places often offer reimbursements.

What about openness?

Openness is still very similar to previous era.

However, openness is becoming more common and can include exchanging identifying information. Most agencies allow the couple and the birthparents to establish the level of openness desired. Agencies offer education about openness. Some agencies allow only open adoptions.