

Adoption: What Can Catholic Charities Do for You?

In the Diocese of Youngstown, Catholic Charities can provide the following services and/or links with the following services to assist you in the adoption process.

1. **One-on-One Consultation:** If you are interested in receiving more information about the adoption process, Catholic Charities will meet with you to discuss your options and assist you through the adoption process.
2. **Home Study:** A home study is a review of you, your spouse, and anyone else living in your home. It highlights items such as relationships and history, interactions with children, your childhood, and your home and neighborhood. The home study allows the courts and Catholic Charities to determine if a stable environment exists for a family to receive an adoptive placement. Collecting documents for the home study can be time consuming. Items such as birth certificates and marriage license are required to confirm your identity. Since the home study can be the lengthiest piece of getting ready to adopt, it is recommended that you begin this process as soon as possible. Catholic Charities employs qualified adoption assessors to perform home studies.
3. **Infant Adoption Training:** Prospective adoptive couples are given information and training on adopting children ages 0-1.
4. **International Adoption Assistance:** Catholic Charities acts as an intermediary with international adoption agencies to assist families considering an international placement. Catholic Charities can conduct the home study and provide adoption preparation, information and post-placement supervision to facilitate the adoption process. Catholic Charities **does not** facilitate the international adoption process itself, but works with agencies that can.
5. **Adoption Search:** Catholic Charities may provide certain non-identifying information to persons impacted by adoption, in accordance with State laws regarding the release of such information.
6. **Foster Parent Training:** Catholic Charities can license foster homes in the State of Ohio.
7. **Information, Referral and Advocacy:** Although Catholic Charities has very limited adoption activity at the present time, we recognize that there are many couples in our Diocese interested in the possibility of adoption. Because of this need, Catholic Charities will provide necessary information and referral to assist couples with the adoption process.

Fees for Adoption Services

The placement of a child through Catholic Charities is both a time and labor-intensive process. Our adoption specialists maintain the necessary licensures and continuing education requirements to ensure the professional delivery of services for all parties involved in the adoption process. Fees must be charged in order to help offset the staffing and administrative costs associated with a completed adoption placement.

Below is a listing of approximate fees charged for adoption services:

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Adoption placement | \$ 4,000 - \$7,000 |
| <i>includes home study, pre- and post-placement services, placement, etc.</i> | |
| Home study: | \$ 1,500 |
| Home study update fee: | \$ 500 |
| Post-placement supervision: | \$ 250 |
| Adoption search | \$ 25 |

Fees are approximate and subject to change without notice. Additional fees not listed on this sheet may also apply. For an explanation of fees or for more information, contact the Catholic Charities adoption specialist in your area. Names and phone numbers are provided in this informational packet.

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Youngstown

ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE PROGRAM SUMMARY

- Through its services to women, children and families, Catholic Charities promotes the pro-life position of the Catholic Church. Historically, Catholic Charities has responded with love and compassion to those who have looked to the Church for help and hope in their time of crisis.
- Catholic Charities Regional Agency maintains an adoption license and facilitates adoption services and placements on behalf of the four Catholic Charities social service agencies in the Diocese of Youngstown.
- Thousands of children in the State of Ohio are in the foster care system, waiting for permanent adoption placements. Many of these children are school-aged and/or possess special needs. Catholic Charities believes that finding homes for Ohio's waiting children should be a priority.
- A number of children in foster care "age out" of the system each year, meaning that they are released as independent adults at the age of 18. These young adults, many of whom are still in high school, are at-risk for poverty and/or other serious challenges including homelessness, incarceration, and addiction. Catholic Charities believes that offering services to these children preparing for independence without family support should be a priority.
- With regard to its adoption services, Catholic Charities can provide information to couples interested in adoption, and help pregnant women create an adoption plan if the need is presented. Catholic Charities can also work with parishes to recruit adoptive families for Ohio's waiting children.
- In order to protect the rights and the emotional well-being of all parties involved in the adoption process, Catholic Charities will remain faithful to its history of not facilitating open adoptions.
- Catholic Charities supports the efforts of local organizations through service, advocacy and convening on issues concerning the welfare of children.

Adoption FAQs

Who may adopt?

1. A husband and wife jointly;
2. A stepparent; OR
3. A single adult

Who may be adopted?

1. A minor child OR
2. An adult

What are the types of adoption?

- **Agency Adoption.** When an agency licensed by the State of Ohio originates the adoption process, the county Probate Court involvement is limited to the final stages of the adoption. The agency approves the placement, conducts the home study, and recommends the adoption to the Court. Adoption agencies have trained, professional staff, and use legal counsel to insure that adoptions are legally, effectively, and efficiently handled.
- **Independent Adoption.** In this instance, a licensed adoption agency is not involved. It is generally handled by a private attorney working directly with the Court. On occasion, the child may be related to persons seeking to adopt, such as a grandchild, niece, nephew, etc. At other times, there is no relationship between the child to be adopted and the petitioners.
- **Step-Parent Adoption.** The person seeking to adopt is either a step-father or step-mother. The parent whose right is being terminated must consent, unless his or her consent is not required.
- **Interstate Adoption.** Where a child is born in one state and the adopting parents are residents of another state, both states' Departments of Human Services must be involved through the Interstate compact. The Probate Court will supervise these proceedings.
- **Foreign Adoption.** If an Ohio family adopts a child born in another country, the adoption is considered a Foreign Adoption. Such adoptions may occur in the country of birth or in Ohio. All foreign adoptions must be processed through the U. S. Department of Immigration and Naturalization. Catholic Charities often refers to this type of adoption as "international."
- **Adult Adoption.** An adult may be adopted in the following instances:
 - the adult is totally and permanently disabled;
 - the adult is determined to be mentally retarded as defined by O.R.C. 5103.01; OR
 - the adult has established a child-foster parent or child-stepparent relationship with the petitioner as a minor

Who must consent?

The parents of the minor child to be adopted, a minor of the age of 12 years and an adult adoptee must consent to adoption. However, under certain circumstances, the consent of either or both natural parents may be waived. Therefore, questions concerning consent should be directed to an agency or attorney.

What are the rights of an unwed father?

An unwed father, known as a putative father, may preserve his rights to consent to adoption of a child born after January 1, 1997, by registering with the Ohio Department of Human Services, Putative Father Registry. The registration must occur either prior to birth, or not later than thirty days after birth. To determine the rights of a putative father prior to January 1, 1997, you must contact a licensed agency or attorney.

What is an open adoption?

As an alternative to a traditional closed adoption where identities are not disclosed, an open adoption may occur when both the natural and adopting parents, prior to the adoption, voluntarily disclose their identities to each other. Open adoption law applies only to non-relative adoptions and may involve a non-binding agreement for contact between the

adopted child and the natural parent(s). However, all parental control of the adopted child remains with the adopting parents. For more information on open adoptions, contact an agency or attorney. Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Youngstown does not facilitate open adoptions.

Where should I file for adoption?

Since the Probate Court has exclusive jurisdiction over adoptions, you are required to file for adoption in the Probate Court of the county where one of the following apply: 1. The agency having custody of the child is located; 2. The child was born; 3. The person or persons seeking to adopt reside; 4. The county of residence for a petitioner stationed elsewhere because of military service; 5. In an independent placement, where the natural parent resides.

Is a home study necessary?

Yes. Regardless of the type of adoption, a home study is required as part of the assessment process. An individual known as an assessor, who is qualified and trained for the task, will complete the home study. In certain cases, assessors from the Court's own staff may be utilized at no charge to the person(s) requesting an adoption. Catholic Charities maintains the necessary licensure and the appropriate staffing to complete home studies for prospective adoptive families.

Must I have an attorney?

Yes. Only an attorney or agency may arrange an adoption.

Are accountings for fees and costs required?

Yes. Every adoption requires that a preliminary estimate of accounting be filed with the Probate Court, and at the same time as the petition for adoption is filed. Additionally, a final accounting must be filed not later than ten days before the final hearing upon every adoption and the petition to recognize a foreign decree of adoption.

Only certain costs and expenses are allowed under Ohio law and by the local rules of the Court. Therefore, every petitioner is urged to work closely with their legal counsel.

Must I appear in Court?

Yes. Whether adopting through an agency or independently, the person(s) seeking to adopt and the child or children sought for adoption must appear before the Probate Court for the final hearing. In certain circumstances other appearances may be required. Exceptions can only be granted by the Court and only upon a showing of good cause.

Who has access to adoption files?

Adoption files are confidential and closed to the public. Nevertheless, the adoptee or adopting parents may obtain the following information by filing a petition for the release of such information with the appropriate Probate Court:

- **Medical Information.** Generally, all adoption records are open for the purpose of obtaining the medical background of biological parents. The Court or agency involved in the adoption should be contacted for such information.
- **Identifying Information.** For adoptions prior to 1964, copies of the original birth certificate may be obtained from the appropriate State Bureau of Vital Statistics. For adoptions finalized between 1964 and 1996, adoption records are closed. Identifying information may be released only if the biological parent(s), or an adult sibling, has signed a Release of Information. For adoptions finalized after September 18, 1996, adoption records are considered open, unless the biological parent(s) have requested that identifying information be withheld. The individual State Bureau of Vital Statistics should be contacted.

Is the birth certificate changed?

Yes. The original birth certificate will be sealed and a new birth certificate will be issued. The adopting parents will be reflected on the birth certificate, just as though they had been the biological parents. Adopted children both in Ohio or a foreign country receive their new birth certificates from the Bureau of Vital Statistics, Columbus, Ohio. Children adopted in Ohio, but born in other states, obtain their new birth certificates from the Bureau of Vital Statistics in the state where they were born.

Where can I obtain information about adoption?

Catholic Charities Regional Agency
175 Laird Avenue NE
Warren, Ohio 44483
330-393-4254
Contact: Paula Smigrocky

State Agencies:

Bureau of Vital Statistics
Ohio Department of Health
35 E. Chestnut Street, 6th Floor
P. O. Box 15098
Columbus, Ohio 43215-0098
614-644-5635
www.odh.ohio.gov/vitalstatistics

Ohio Putative Father Registry
30 E. Broad Street, 31st Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43266-0423
888-313-3100

Ohio Department of Human Services
30 E. Broad Street, 31st Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43266-0423
614-466-8207

County Offices:

Ashtabula County Probate Court
25 W. Jefferson Street
Jefferson, Ohio 44047
440-576-3451

Ashtabula County Children Services
3914 C Court
Ashtabula, Ohio 44004
440-998-1811

Columbiana County Probate Court
260 W. Lincoln Way
Lisbon, Ohio 44432
330-424-4071

Columbiana County Division of Children Services
110 N. Nelson Ave.
Lisbon, Ohio 44432
330-424-7781

Mahoning County Probate Court
120 Market Street, 1st Floor
Youngstown, Ohio 44503
330-740-2311

Mahoning County Children Services
222 W. Federal Street, 4th Floor
Youngstown, Ohio 44503
330-941-8888

Portage County Probate Court
203 W. Main Street
Ravenna, Ohio 44266
330-297-3870

Portage County Children Services
449 Meridian Street
Ravenna, Ohio 44266
330-297-3750

Stark County Probate Court
110 Central Plaza S #501
Canton, Ohio 44702
330-451-7755

Stark County Children Services
300 Market Avenue W
Canton, Ohio 44702
330-451-8789

Trumbull County Probate Court
161 High Street
Warren, Ohio 44481
330-675-2521

Trumbull County Children Services
2282 Reeves Road NE
Warren, Ohio 44483
330-372-2010

Other Resources:

Northeast Ohio Adoption Services
5000 E. Market Street #26
Warren, Ohio 44484
800-686-6627