



# Frequently Asked Questions from Fathers

## ***“What if I’m not sure I’m the father?”***

If you are named as a potential father, the agency has an obligation to involve you in adoption planning. You may or may not need a paternity test. If you are ok with an adoption plan, you can choose to sign the legal paperwork without completing a paternity test. If you want to parent, you will need to complete a paternity test.

## ***“I want to parent. She wants adoption. What can I do?”***

Adoption counselors work with both parents whether or not they are in agreement with the adoption plan. You have equal rights in making a decision for your baby’s future. Contact the agency right away to make your wishes known.

## ***“What are the steps if I want to parent?”***

- Contact the agency
- Make a parenting plan including housing, childcare, financial resources, and support
- Obtain baby care necessities
- Complete a paternity test after the baby is born
- Some states also have a Putative Father Registry which allows an unmarried man who believe he could be a father to register his information to be contacted in case of an adoption placement. By putting your name on the registry you are claiming possible paternity and taking financial responsibility for the child.

The steps to parenting after involving an adoption agency are the same for mothers and fathers. If there is a concern about the baby’s safety, counselors will be required to make a referral to the state/county prior to the baby being released into a parent’s care.

## ***“I’m not ready to parent but I don’t believe in adoption.”***

**We encourage you to speak with the mother about your feelings.** It’s important to have all the facts about what adoption is and isn’t before making a final decision. A lot of people aren’t familiar with what adoption looks like today including open adoption. Talking to a counselor about your rights and concerns can be helpful.

## ***“What does open adoption mean?”***

Open adoption means there is some level of ongoing contact between birth parents, adoptive parents and the child. Often, open adoption relationships include sharing of photos and letters as well as in-person visits. This allows birth parents the opportunity to stay in touch as their child grows. Every open adoption relationship is different and develops over time. You can choose what feels best for you even if that means limited contact.

## ***“I’m ok with adoption, how involved do I have to be?”***

Birth fathers can be as involved as they choose to be. At a minimum, you need to speak to a counselor to confirm that you are ok with making an adoption plan, provide your contact information, and sign legal paperwork for the adoption. If you would like to be more involved you can choose and meet the family and have an open adoption relationship as your child grows up.

### ***“Can I pick the adoptive family for my baby?”***

Open adoption means **you** get to choose the level of involvement you want throughout the adoption process. If you would like to choose the adoptive family for your baby, you have a say along with the baby’s mother. Counselors will provide you with information about all the families who match your situation and preferences. You will be able to review a profile created by the family which will give you a glimpse of what their life looks like. Many of the profiles are available to view on our website: [www.aftth.org](http://www.aftth.org).

### ***“What if I want contact with the adoptive family but the baby’s mother doesn’t?”***

You are each entitled to your own open adoption arrangement with the adoptive family. Those arrangements can be similar or completely different depending on your preferences. Make sure to speak with your counselor about the level of contact you want.

### ***“How do I know the family will keep their promises?”***

This is one of the most common fears for men and women considering adoption. Adoptive families choose Adoptions From The Heart because we specialize in open adoption. They make a commitment to openness when they enter our program. Families receive education about the benefits of open adoption and the importance of keeping any promises they make. When you review profiles, they will only be of families committed to the same level of openness that you seek.

Many states allow for a legally enforceable future contact agreement between adoptive parents and birth parents. This agreement will be entered into a court order as a part of the adoption process and will provide additional protection for birth parents.

### ***“How will I know my baby will be safe with the adoptive family?”***

All adoptive families enter a lengthy screening process before they are approved to adopt. They obtain criminal and child abuse clearances and medical exams, and report on their finances and family history. References are provided from people who have seen them with children and a visit is made to their home to ensure that it is safe for a child. After counselors review everything, they determine if a family is approved to adopt.

After the baby goes home with the family, their counselor continues to monitor them for a period of 6-8 months to ensure that the baby is safe and well-cared for in the family’s home. Reports about these visits are provided to the court for the adoption finalization.

### ***“Can I change my mind?”***

You can always change your mind about the adoption plan before the baby is born or immediately afterwards. This is a difficult decision, and many expecting parents find they need to wait until their baby is born to be sure. If you choose to move forward with adoption, each state has a certain amount of time in which you can legally change your mind. See the “Your Rights About Parenting and Adoption” brochure for fathers and talk to your counselor for more details.

**Adoption isn’t what I thought it would be. I didn’t understand about open adoption and how involved I could be. I thought the social workers would only care about the mother but they cared about me too. I have yearly visits with my son and love getting pictures. - Derrick**

