

# Adoption



Fertility New Zealand is a registered charity supporting people with fertility issues

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## Thinking about adoption

Considering shifting focus from fertility treatment to adoption as a way of building a family is a significant decision. When fertility treatment is no longer viable (which could be for a number of reasons), there are still options available; adoption being one such option. Many people will wish to think about the impact of adoption on them as a family before they begin the process. Couples and singles most often undertake fertility treatment in order to become parents of a child genetically related to them. It is completely normal to go through a grieving process, mourning the loss of what could have been. Adoption involves a completely different process for achieving a child; no less powerful and important; but certainly different.

## Who can adopt

Anybody within New Zealand may make contact with Oranga Tamariki (OT) to enquire about adoption. OT will guide families from there.

## Important considerations

It is strongly recommended by both fertility clinics and OT that people finish any form of fertility treatment before applying to adopt. Both fertility treatment and the adoption process are emotionally exhausting and require people's full attention.

## Open adoption

Open adoptions are based on an agreement reached at the time of placing a child with adoptive parents. In essence, there will be some form of continued contact between the birth parents, the adoptive parent(s) and the child. The nature of this contact varies between people and over time within families. The agreement is voluntary and needs to be flexible.

## The process of adoption

The process of adoption is robust and can be lengthy.

- **Step 1** Initial contact should be made with the Adoption Services section of OT (current contact details on the OT website). People will

be recommended to attend an information session which explains the adoption process and allows time to discuss issues and answer questions.

- **Step 2** A number of forms are required to be completed and submitted including provision of medical information and authority for OT to conduct police checks and reference checks.
- **Step 3** Attendance is then required at a series of seminars to give an understanding of adoption within New Zealand and internationally, and the open adoption system. At this point, people are assigned a social worker to become the contact with Adoption Services.
- **Step 4** Social worker interviews and home visits from social workers are conducted, which focus on the many issues surrounding adoption.
- **Step 5** People are then required to create a profile about themselves to be made available to birth parents in order to help selection. When the requirements are completed, the profile is put into the pool for consideration by birth parents.

If chosen by birth parents, the adopting parent(s) will be supported through the next stages by their social worker. This time is an exciting and anxious time for adopting parent(s).

## Domestic adoption

Deciding to participate in the adoption process unfortunately does not guarantee a child. There are many New Zealanders who would like to adopt a child, with only a small number available at any given time. Each region can be different, and as such it is worth discussing with a social worker to determine what the local situation is.

## Inter-country adoption (ICA)

New Zealand law allows adoption from certain overseas countries. Inter-country adoption has costs associated with the process; however the likelihood of successfully adopting a child is relatively good once you are approved. Inter-country adoption has special considerations and

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◀ thorough planning and consideration is strongly recommended. The first stage of ICA, education and assessment, can be conducted by Adoption First Steps or OT. The second stage, placement, is available through ICANZ, OT or Compassion for Orphans.

## The new family

It takes time for any new parents to build a lifestyle with their child. Because adoption tends to happen quickly, new parents may find the transition difficult as they come to terms with the impact such as the reduction to a single income; one parent at home during the day; broken nights' sleep, and the cost of obtaining clothes and equipment.

While this initial adjustment may seem daunting, there is support available and the assigned social worker is available in the early stages to help work through the transition period.

## The legal situation

In New Zealand, a birth mother is not legally allowed to sign an interim adoption order until 10 full days have elapsed since the birth of her child. She is required to see a separate lawyer from the adopting parents. Upon her signing, the adoptive parents are able to sign their side of the agreement to become the legal parents of the child. At that point, the adoptive parents can take the child home to begin their lives together as a family.

This interim order will need to be made final after about a year by applying to the court for the final order. At this point the adopted child is given a new birth certificate. The adoptive parents' lawyer will be familiar with the process of adoption and will help guide parents through this.

## Guardianship and fostering

Guardianship and fostering are other ways OT can help you become parents. OT has a policy to find permanent homes for children under 5 years of age as quickly as possible after permanently removing them from their carer. These children are generally not babies but young children. Guardianship is shared with OT who can help in understanding this process.

Fostering is available through a number of organisations. It can involve short term care and longer term care. To learn about this option, contact foster care organisations through OT.

## In conclusion

Deciding to commence the adoption process requires thought and discussion. It is a big step, often with a change in focus with different goals and steps along the way. There are counsellors at fertility clinics and social workers at OT who are trained and able to provide information to help with this transition. Families created by adoption are very similar in most ways to families with children born to them. ■

### For further information contact:

- **Oranga Tamariki**  
Adoption Information & Services Unit  
[www.orangatamariki.govt.nz](http://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz)  
0508 326 459
- **ICANZ**  
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Ph: 09 623 9369  
Email: [office@icanz.gen.nz](mailto:office@icanz.gen.nz)  
[www.icanz.gen.nz](http://www.icanz.gen.nz)
- **Adoption First Steps**  
Ph: 027 237 2014  
Email: [info@adoptionfirststeps.org.nz](mailto:info@adoptionfirststeps.org.nz)  
[www.adoptionfirststeps.org.nz](http://www.adoptionfirststeps.org.nz)
- **Compassion for Orphans**  
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Please note that the information presented in this brochure is intended only as a brief summary. For specific advice on your particular medical situation you should always consult your professional health care provider.  
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PO Box 28262, Remuera, Auckland 1541  
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