

Your Child's Arrival

Preparing for Your Child's Arrival

Depending on your situation and the child you adopt, you may need to make these preparations for your child's arrival:

- Update the family's insurance. An adopted child can be covered under your health insurance from the date he or she is placed with your family. Group health insurance carriers must insure adoptees under the terms of their parents' policy, and cannot deny coverage because of pre-existing conditions. If your child is eligible for an adoption subsidy, he or she may be covered through Medicaid. Also, change beneficiary designations on life insurance policies and update wills.
- Get and keep a copy of the child's original birth certificate. Once the adoption is finalized, that document is sealed and neither you nor the adoptee can access it. Without it, some adoptees have had trouble getting passports and applying for affirmative action status. With it, adoptees may have an easier time searching for their biological roots, if and when they decide to do so.
- Prepare to get a new social security number and birth certificate for your child—one that recognizes the child's new last name. The social security number will be necessary for you to claim the child as a dependent for tax purposes.
- Negotiate an adoption assistance agreement. Children with special needs may be eligible for federal or state benefits. Ask your agency about the steps you must take to negotiate an agreement.
- Line up services for your child and yourself. You will need to enroll an older child in school; arrange for therapy, counseling, or tutoring; and identify respite care options. You might also want to join an adoptive parent support group.
- Learn about the child's habits and personality to ease the transition into your family. Talk to the child's foster parents or caseworker. For instance: what are the child's favorite foods and games? What's the best way to comfort the child?
- Make your house child-friendly. Move or remove household objects that could be dangerous. Prepare the child's room to make it welcoming and to signal that the area belongs to him or her.
- If applicable, inform your other children about changes that will occur. Their roles may change when the new child arrives, so prepare them to share, adjust schedules, and withhold judgment during the transition. Include everyone in visits and trial weekends before the child is placed.