



Dear Prospective Adoptive Parents,

Thank you for your interest in learning more about Adoption Options, Inc. We look forward to potentially working with you on this exciting journey of building your family through adoption. Adoption Options, Inc., formerly known as Special Link, Inc., is a non-profit, Christian agency founded in 1997 in South Carolina. Our mission is to educate birth and adoptive families on the benefits and blessings of the Open Adoption option, and to help find a family for every child, no matter age, race, or special needs. We have also been called to expand our ministry to share God's love with the young women we work with and help equip them to be on a path for success in the months and years following placement through the Bloom Program.

Adoption Options, Inc., is located in Charleston, and we serve expectant parents and adoptive parents both here in South Carolina and anywhere in the United States. We offer the following domestic adoption services:

- Infant – Toddler Program
- Special Link Program
- Identified Adoption Assistance
- Home Study / Post-Placement Services

We welcome all interested families in attending an information seminar to learn more about our philosophies and how we differ from other agencies. The steps for getting started with Adoption Options, Inc., are listed below in this information packet. You will also find additional information on our agency fees, a fee schedule, and average wait times.

Once your parent profile is completed, we can begin to work to match you with an expectant parent or waiting child. The average wait times for the programs vary and are listed below in the program descriptions. We generally will not inform you when your profile is being shown to avoid any potential disappointment. If you do not hear from us for an extended period of time, it does not mean that there has not been any activity with your profile. We will interview an expectant mother or placing parent to learn about her background and their criteria for potential adoptive parents and then show them all profiles that match both what you and they are looking for in an adoption placement. When you have been selected, you will be presented with the situation and given the opportunity to consider it and accept or decline within the time requested.

We look forward to working with you and being a part of your adoption journey.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Emily M. Barrett".

Emily M. Barrett
Executive Director

*** Information and policies updated as of December 31, 2022*

PROGRAMS & SERVICES AVAILABLE

Adoption Options, Inc., has multiple programs and services for adoption, with each program having varying requirements. While we are a Christian agency, we welcome all married couples and single parents of any faith to apply for our programs. However, we do caution applicants that most expectant parents request traditional married, Christian couples, so the wait times can be longer for others. All adoptive parents must be home study approved to adopt a child through any of our adoption programs.

Adoptive parents must complete a minimum of 10 hours of adoption training along with an infant/child first aid training class through the [Red Cross](#), local hospital or health department following the approval of their application. Families adopting through Adoption Options, Inc., are invited to participate in our mentoring program through which we will connect you with other families who have previously adopted through us. This program provides our clients not only with advice and support from fellow adoptive parents, but also often leads to new friendships for both the parents and the children.

ADOPTIVE PARENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Adoption Options, Inc., accepts a limited number of couples into its programs to keep wait times for placement at a minimum. You are eligible to apply for one or both of our programs if you meet the criteria listed below. Families who have previously adopted a child and then placed that child for adoption in a new home are not eligible to apply.

	Infant / Toddler Program	Special Link Program
Home Study Approval	Yes	Yes
Maximum Combined Age	110 (50 for single parent)	120 (60 for single parent)
Minimum Combined Age	45 (25 for single parent)	50 (30 for single parent)
Length of Marriage	2 years	3 years
Number of Divorces	1	1
Unmarried Couples Adopt	No	No
Maximum Number of Children in Home	4	3
Minimum Age of Youngest Child in Home	1 year	3 years
Simultaneously Trying to Conceive	No	No
U.S. Resident	Yes	Yes

*** Exceptions can be made for certain requirements on a case-by-case basis.*

Infant / Toddler Program (Newborn – 3 years)

The Infant/Toddler program includes children of any race or racial combination who have had no to mild substance exposure in utero and are not expected to have any significant health issues. Most children placed through this program are newborns, but on occasion a toddler is available. The waiting period varies in this program, but on average, families are matched within 12-18 months.

Almost all expectant parents are looking to have at least a semi-open adoption. They want to have the opportunity to get to know the adoptive parents during the pregnancy and request letters and pictures after the child's birth. Many expectant parents also request a yearly visit with the child. Adoption Options, Inc., utilizes the [ChildConnect](#) program for most placements and requires all of our families to agree to letters and pictures several times a year for the first 5 years and then yearly until age 18.

Special Link Program (Newborn – 18 years)

The Special Link Program includes children of any race who are considered "harder to place" for a variety of reasons, such as age, significant substance exposure, physical special needs, age, secondary placement (previous adoption has failed), etc. Most Special Link children are newborns - age 12, but on occasion a teenager is available. The waiting period varies in this program and can range anywhere from 6 months to 3 years depending on what the adoptive family is looking for in a match.

Openness and ongoing post-placement contact in this program will vary based upon the situation. With older children, Adoption Options, Inc., will request that a licensed child therapist evaluate the child and make a recommendation regarding ongoing contact. We will provide you with the details on openness and ongoing contact for the particular situation prior to your acceptance of the match.

Families who accept a match for a child with emotional and/or physical special needs must identify an appropriate therapist prior to the child being placed in their home, and additional training could be required. Adoption Options, Inc., can help you locate resources in your area if needed. Please note that your home study must approve you for the situation (older child, physical special needs, etc.) in order to be considered, so limit your application to situations for which you are approved.

Identified Adoption Services

If you identify an expectant mother who has chosen you to adopt her child, you will still need support and guidance during the adoption process in order to ensure that the adoption goes smoothly and all legal requirements are met. This applies even in inter-family adoptions. If you do not have a current home study, one will need to be obtained. Adoption Options, Inc., can help assist you and provide the services both you and the expectant parent(s) will need for the adoption.

Home Study / Post-Placement Services

Families working with Adoption Options, Inc., to be matched with an expectant mother must have their home study and post-placement report conducted by the agency if they do not already have a current home study. We can also assist adoptive families who have identified adoptions or are working with another adoption entity to be matched. If you move here from another state, we will be happy to update your home study to reflect the move and complete the appropriate background checks.

If you need assistance with something you do not see listed here, please contact us to see if we can help you or refer you to a qualified professional who can.

PROGRAM FEES

Adoption Options, Inc., understands that adoptions can be costly and are a major financial decision for adoptive families. According to Adoptive Families magazine, the average cost of a private adoption through a domestic agency is over \$43,000.00. As a non-profit, we try to make adoptions as affordable as possible for our families and believe that money should never be a barrier to growing your family. Adoption Options, Inc. encourages our families to apply for grants and utilize fundraisers and will provide a list of resources for financial assistance for your adoption.

Other than your initial adoption costs (application, home study and training) and expectant mother expenses (i.e.: living expenses, counseling, legal fees), our agency fees are **all-inclusive**, and include everything from the creation of your adoption profile to finalization of your adoption (if you retain Palmetto Adoption Law Group, LLC). We believe this makes it easier for our families to know what to expect up front so they can budget accordingly. Our fees are subject to change based on increased costs but your budget will still apply. Adoptive families who wish to apply simultaneously to both the Infant/Toddler Program and the Special Link Program are encouraged to do so. Agency fees for Adoption Options, Inc., are:

Infant /Toddler Program: \$30,000 **
 Special Link Program: \$18,000 - \$25,000 **

** Adoptive parents who do not reside in South Carolina will incur additional fees/costs due to a required court order approving the out-of-state placement. This order must be obtained prior to ICPC being filed. Non-residents must return to South Carolina to finalize their adoption. **

We do not restrict our families from working with other agencies / attorneys at the same time as working with us. However, we do want to make families aware that some of the fees are non-refundable, even if they match through another adoption entity or chose to no longer pursue adoption, after paying these fees to Adoption Options. Inc.

INITIAL ADOPTION COSTS

Application Fees (non-refundable)	This fee covers our time in reviewing your application and supporting documents.
First Time Families	\$500
Returning Families	\$200

** The fee is the same whether applying for one or both of our programs.

Home Study Fees (non-refundable)	Mileage is charged at the IRS rate if over 20 miles. Fees are due prior to home visit.
Initial Home Study	\$1750
Post-Placement Report	\$500
Home Study Update	\$950
Expedited Report (additional fee to cost of home study)	\$400
Home Study Review (for families who obtained a home study outside of Adoption Options, Inc.)	\$250

AGENCY FEES

Other than initial adoption costs and expectant mother expenses, our agency fees are **all-inclusive** and include the following:

Advertising Costs

We utilize a variety of advertising options, including online marketing and the [ParentFinder Family Marketing Program](#) to create your adoption profile.

Expectant / Placing Parent Outreach Costs

Prior to matching with an adoptive family, we will work with an expectant mother or placing parents in creating their adoption plan and incur related expenses.

Varied Adoption Costs

Every adoption entails a variety of related costs, such office expenses, mailings, travel, meals, etc.

Consents & Relinquishments

Fees are paid to an attorney or Certified Adoption Investigator as an independent party to obtain the consents and relinquishments of the biological or placing parents.

Medical / Social History

A narrative summary of the biological family's medical and social history is obtained.

Disruption "Insurance" Fund

We maintain a fund that acts as insurance to help cover some or all of paid expectant mother living expenses if the adoption disrupts prior to placement.

Finalization Fees/Costs

If the adoptive parents choose to retain Palmetto Adoption Law Group, LLC, to finalize the adoption, agency fees will include legal fees for an uncontested adoption, as well as court filing fees, Guardian ad Litem fees, an amended birth certificate, father registry search and office costs. If notice and/or hearings are required due to a biological or legal father, additional fees and costs may be due to the attorney.

Child Connect Service (if applicable)

[Child Connect](#) serves as a third-party to handle the exchange of pictures and updates between the adoptive family and the biological parent(s).

ICPC Processing (if applicable)

We will process the packet through the ICPC offices for SC and the adoptive parents' state. A court order must be obtained approving the child to be adopted by non-residents prior to filing ICPC.

Application of Non-Recurring Subsidy (for SC residents - if applicable)

SC residents could qualify for a non-recurring \$1500 subsidy through the State if the child meets eligibility requirements. The majority of our placements through both programs will qualify.

In addition to agency fees, adoptive parents will be asked to pay the following if requested by the expectant mother:

Expectant Mother Expenses (Living, Counseling, Medical, etc.)

Expectant mother expenses typically range from \$0 - \$10,000. If the expectant mother requests legal representation, the adoptive parents will be responsible for those costs as well. The adoptive parents will be provided with an anticipated estimate of the anticipated expenses prior to accepting the match.

PAYMENT OF FEES

Agency fees for Adoption Options, Inc., are due in 4 installments as listed below. The 1st and 2nd payment are *non-refundable* and covers marketing expenses, your ParentFinder adoption profile, expectant parent outreach, and other expenses incurred by us in working to match you. Once matched, all remaining payments are held in a trust account rather than a general fund.

** We offer a 5-10% discount for active-duty military members. **

Infant-Toddler Program	<i>(SC residents: \$30,000 / Non-residents: \$34,000)</i>		
	Amount	When Due	Fees Roll Over if Adoption Disrupts?
1st Installment	\$3000	Upon acceptance of application	N/A (non-refundable)
2nd Installment	\$6000	Upon completion of home study and parent profile	N/A (non-refundable)
3rd Installment	\$10,500	Upon acceptance of match	Yes, minus costs paid
4th Installment	\$10,500	72 hours prior to birth / placement	Yes, minus costs paid
Non-Resident Fee **	\$4000	At time of 3 rd installment	Yes, minus costs paid

Special Link Program	<i>(Fees will vary based on the situation)</i>		
	Amount	When Due	Fees Roll Over if Adoption Disrupts?
1st Installment	\$3000	Upon acceptance of application	N/A (non-refundable)
2nd Installment	\$6000	Upon completion of home study and parent profile	N/A (non-refundable)
3rd Installment	\$4500 - \$8000	Upon acceptance of match	Yes, minus costs paid
4th Installment	\$4500 - \$8000	72 hours prior to birth / placement	Yes, minus costs paid
Non-Resident Fee **	\$4000	At time of 3 rd installment	Yes, minus costs paid

Dual Program	<i>(Fees will depend on the program utilized)</i>		
	Amount	When Due	Fees Roll Over if Adoption Disrupts?
1st & 2nd Installment	Same for both programs	Same for both programs	N/A (non-refundable)
3rd & 4th Installment	Same as program used	Same as program used	Yes, minus costs paid
Non-Resident Fee **	\$4000	Same as program used	Yes, minus costs paid

INDIVIDUAL AGENCY SERVICES FEES

Identified Adoption Agency Fees – vary per situation

Adoption Options, Inc., can assist families who match with an expectant parent independently to ensure the adoption goes as smoothly as possible and meets all legal requirements. Fees will vary based upon the services needed. Please contact us for an estimate.

Home Study Fees (non-refundable)	- Mileage is charged at the IRS rate if over 20 miles. Fees are due prior to home visit. - Adoption Options, Inc. can also provide home study services for families who do not use the agency to be matched.	
	Fee	Notes
Initial Domestic Home Study	\$1750	A SC home study is good for 1 year,
Post-Placement Report (per report)	\$500	SC requires 1 post-placement visit. Non-residents might have additional requirements in their home state.
Home Study Update	\$950	An update will reflect any changes since your additional home study was completed. All background checks must be updated.
Expedited Home Study	\$400	Your home study can be expedited for an additional fee in a time-sensitive situation.
Additional Copy of the Home Study	\$40	Additional copies with attachments will be sent via Priority Mail with tracking.
Sanitized Copy of the Home Study	\$150	A copy of the home study with all identifying information redacted.
Non-Agency Home Study Review	\$250	Adoption Options will review a home study that it did not perform to ensure it meets all state and agency requirements.
Additional Adult(s) in Home	\$200	SC requires any person in the home over 18 to be included in the home study in addition to the adoptive parents. This fee is per person.

Agency Networking Fees – vary per situation

Adoption Options, Inc., works to match our families with expectant parents who make an adoption plan through our agency. However, there are times when we are contacted by other agencies or adoption attorneys seeking families open to a particular situation. We will forward your profile to be presented for the situation if you match the criteria and it is within your budget. If you are chosen, you will be given the opportunity to accept or decline the match just as if you were matched through Adoption Options, Inc. Our fees will cover the amount of work required of Adoption Options, Inc.

	Infant – Toddler Program	Special Link Program
Networking Fees	\$2000 - \$5000	\$0 - \$3000

Cradle Care Fees – \$350-\$500 / week

In certain situations, a biological or placing parent relinquishes the child to Adoption Options, Inc., prior to an adoptive family being identified. Cradle care serves as a temporary home until an adoptive family is selected. Fees will vary based upon the services needed.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Step 1: Information Session

Once you have read through this information packet and would like to learn more about becoming an Adoption Options, Inc. family, your first step is to attend a 30 minute information session held via Zoom twice monthly.

Step 2: Complete an Application

Following the information session, please complete the application(s) for the program(s) for which you would like to apply. You are welcome to apply to one or both of our programs. Please return your application(s) along with a picture of your family and application fee. Our Executive Director will have a 30-minute call with you to discuss your application and our agency policies.

Step 3: Adoption Training

If your application is accepted, you must complete at least 10 hours of adoption training, as well as a Red Cross infant/child first-aid class, prior to starting your home study. Once your training is complete, you may modify your application(s) if you desire. *(1st installment of agency fees are due.)*

Step 4: The Home Study / Parent Profile

When you have completed your adoption training, we will send you the packet to start your home study. Upon receipt of your packet and home study fees, you will be contacted by a home study provider who will set an appointment to come meet with you in your home. If you reside outside of SC, we will connect you with an approved home study provider in your state.

We will also connect you with ParentFinder to begin the creation of your parent profile. It is recommended that you start looking through your pictures while you are working on your adoption training as the picture selection is very important. You will receive tips for creating your parent profile, as well as a call from our Director if needed.

Step 5: Ready to Be Matched

When your home study and parent profile are complete, you are ready to be matched. Unlike other agencies, we do not contact you prior to being shown. Your profile will be presented for all situations that meet your criteria indicated in your application. When you are selected, you will be presented with the situation and be given the opportunity to accept or decline the match. We will conduct 6-month reviews with families to discuss how the matching process is going and suggest revisions to your profile if we feel that any need to be made. *(2nd installment of agency fees are due.)*

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Adoption Options, Inc. understands that adoptions can seem expensive, but there are resources available to help ease the worries of financing your adoption. We will share a list of resources that include adoption grant providers, loans, etc. We will also provide access to an online class on the adoption tax credit if requested.

FEDERAL TAX CREDIT

For 2023, the maximum adoption tax credit is \$15,950 for qualified adoption expenses. The maximum credit can be claimed regardless of expenses for an adoption of a child with special needs. The credit directly offsets the amount of tax due – dollar for dollar, and phase outs begin to apply for taxpayers with a modified adjusted gross income of \$223,410.

STATE TAX DEDUCTION (SC Residents)

SC residents who adopt a special needs child can deduct \$2000 in state taxes every year as long as the child qualifies as a dependent on the federal income tax return until the child is age 19, or age 24 if a full-time student. Under the SC Code of Laws, a special needs child is one that is unlikely to be adopted without assistance as determined by the S.C. Department of Social Services because of conditions such as ethnic minority status, age, sibling group membership, medical condition, or physical, mental, or emotional handicaps.

NON-RECURRING ADOPTION COSTS SUBSIDY (SC Residents)

SC residents who adopt a special needs child, whether through DSS or a private placement, qualify for one-time \$1500 subsidy. The “special needs” definition for this subsidy is very broad and can include anything from mental or physical disabilities to substance exposure in-utero to having no medical history on a birth parent. This must be applied for before the adoption is finalized, and Adoption Options handles the application for its families.

MILITARY ADOPTION REIMBURSEMENT

Active-duty military personnel qualify for a \$2000 subsidy towards their adoption. An application must be made through the DEERS office following finalization of the adoption.

EMPLOYEE ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Many larger corporations offer financial assistance to their employees who are adopting. For a list of employers with benefits, contact the National Adoption Center at 1-800-GO-ADOPT.

S.C. STATE EMPLOYEE ADOPTION SUBSIDY

State employees who participate in the PEBA Insurance Benefits program qualify for a maximum subsidy amount of \$5000, or \$10,000 for a special-needs child, towards their adoption costs. This subsidy is applied for in the fiscal year following the finalization of the adoption.