

Eligibility Requirements & FAQs for Anchored in Hope

Nightlight Christian Adoptions is licensed by the states of California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas to select suitable families for children in need of adoption. The selection of adoptive parents is based on their eligibility to meet state and agency requirements, their capacity for adoptive parenthood, and the availability of children whose needs they can meet.

<p style="text-align: center;">RESIDENCE</p>	<p>Nightlight can perform Adoptions from Foster Care for families living in one of our licensed states. Please refer to the <i>Anchored in Hope Agreement</i> for details regarding the types of services available.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">HEALTH</p>	<p>Adoptive applicants must give evidence of good health, both physical and mental, which will be verified during the application process by medical examinations and, if recommended, psychological evaluations.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">AGE</p>	<p>Varies depending upon the adoptive couple's state of residence; however, typically, applicants must be at least 25 years old. It is recommended that the youngest parent not be more than 45 years older than the child they are adopting. Exceptions are sometimes made for parents interested in adopting teens. Adoptive parents must be in good physical and mental health to provide for the needs of the child/youth. *</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">MARRIAGE & FAMILY</p>	<p>Adoptive applicants are encouraged to have been married long enough to provide the couple sufficient time to establish a home, financial security, and to adjust to the marriage. Married applicants must have a satisfying and secure marriage and be married a minimum of 2 years at the time of application. Adoptive parents should have no more than six minor children in the home, including the children you are adopting.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">ADOPTION EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS</p>	<p>Education requirements vary depending upon the adoptive couple's state of residence and, in some cases, the regulations of the state from which the family is adopting (child's state). Our goal is to prepare you to be the best parents possible for your child.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">FINANCES</p>	<p>Adoptive applicants must be able to provide a financially stable home, demonstrated by having sufficient income to support an additional child without relying on the child subsidy.</p>

PREGNANCY	Before you begin the adoption process, you need to complete any infertility treatments so you can truly be ready to be the best parent for your adopted child. <u>If you become pregnant while in the adoption process, notify our office immediately.</u> We will then make your file inactive. When you are ready to consider adoption again, generally no sooner than when your child is nearing their first birthday, call us to discuss reactivating your file.
ADOPTION OF SUBSEQUENT CHILDREN	To have adequate time for attachment and bonding, it is important to have a minimum of one year with the child/ren in the home before beginning another adoption.

*Texas families are exempt from the maximum age differential requirement in accordance with Texas law (H.B. No. 2969) and should contact one of our inquiry specialists to discuss eligibility.

Frequently Asked Questions about Anchored in Hope

GENERAL QUESTIONS

What services does Nightlight Christian Adoptions (Nightlight) offer?

Nightlight is licensed to provide the following services:

- Domestic Adoptions: Agency Adoptions, Independent, or Designated Adoptions (more information below)
- International Adoptions: Direct programs in Albania, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong, India, Malawi, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Portugal, Taiwan, Samoa, Uganda, and Ukraine
- Adoption from Foster Care
- Foster Care: Foster care programs available in the following states: California, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas
- Snowflakes® Embryo Adoptions
- Domestic and International Adoption Home Studies, Post Placement/Adoption Supervision and Reports, and Snowflakes Family Evaluations
- Birth parent counseling

Is Nightlight a non-profit agency?

Yes, Nightlight is a private 501(c)(3) non-profit agency. Fees paid by adoptive parents, as well as fundraising efforts throughout the year, cover all agency expenses.

What is your licensure information?

Nightlight has been licensed by the California State Department of Social Services since 1959 and is also licensed in Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas. We are also Hague accredited.

Does Nightlight assist with out-of-state adoptions from foster care?

We can assist you with an interstate adoption. You must use Nightlight for your home study and post placement services. Nightlight can also assist out-of-state families in completing an international, domestic infant, or embryo adoption. Please contact our office to discuss the specific details of your situation.

What if we are not U.S. citizens?

One of the prospective adoptive parents must be a U.S. citizen, the other parent can be a non-U.S. citizen if living in the U.S. legally.

What is adoption from foster care?

Adoption from Foster Care allows children living in the United States foster care system a new opportunity for family. The children have all been removed from their birth home due to abuse and/or neglect, and the right of their biological parents have been terminated, making the children legally free for adoption.

What is the difference between Foster Care, Foster to Adopt, and Adoption from Foster Care?

Foster Care

- Families must work with a licensed foster care agency in their state
- Families must be licensed foster families in their state of residence
- Foster children are placed within their state of residence
- Goal is reunification with the child's birth family
- Foster children are placed with foster families at all stages of the foster care journey
- Foster children are not legally free for adoption

Foster to Adopt

- Families must work with a licensed foster care agency in their state
- Families must be licensed foster families in their state of residence
- Foster children are placed within their state of residence
- Goal is adoption or there is a possibility of a dual goal of adoption and reunification
- Foster children are placed in adoption minded licensed foster homes
- Foster children may become legally free for adoption but parental rights may not have been terminated at the time of placement with the foster family

Adoption from Foster Care

- Agency does not have to be a foster care agency but can be a child placing agency only (with a focus on adoption)
- Families do not have to be licensed foster families, in most cases (please inquire with our Anchored in Hope team about the requirements of your state of residence)
- Families must have an approved adoption home study
- Foster children are placed in pre-adoptive homes outside of their state of residence
- Goal is adoption
- Foster children are legally free & parental rights have already been terminated (99% of the time)

What is the benefit of using an agency to adopt a child from foster care rather than conducting a search on my own?

When using Nightlight to assist in your adoption from foster care, your Nightlight adoption advocate will also search for available children who meet your stated preferences. They will submit your family's home study to the caseworker representing that child and coordinate any additional requests from the child's caseworker. In addition, child welfare workers prefer to communicate with agency personnel and not directly with families. Your Nightlight adoption advocate will walk beside you on the journey and assist you in navigating the adoption from foster care process.

Approximately how long does it usually take to adopt from foster care?

You can be matched with a child any time after you have an approved home study and completed the required education. The wait time depends on the criteria an adoptive family has established for a child and the specific needs of the child.

After 12 months from home study approval, if no child match has been identified, the agreement between you and Nightlight will expire.

What is the adoption from foster care process?

Adoption from Foster Care consists of six parts:

- **Application/Orientation** – The adoption from foster care process begins with your application and orientation to Nightlight's Adoption from Foster Care Program. You will participate in orientation with your home office either in person or via Skype/Zoom, depending on your home office's requirements.
- **Home Study** – The adoption home study is an evaluation and education process required by the state to determine your preparedness to parent through adoption. A home study consists of three components: paperwork, education, and interviews with a home study provider. Your home study will be completed by one of Nightlight's home study providers.
- **Match/Identification of Child** – Once your home study is complete and you have been approved to adopt, you may begin searching for a child by looking at different websites (Adopt US kids, Heart Gallery of America, Raise the Future, Americas Kids Belong, etc.). Your Nightlight adoption advocate will also search available sites for a potential match. Your nightlight adoption advocate will review child profiles to ensure the child meets your stated preferences, prepare you for any concerns identified, offer suggestions of additional questions to ask, and participate in the match call. Your Nightlight adoption advocate will then follow up with the child's case worker regarding the match call. If all parties desire to move forward, your Nightlight adoption advocate will advise you of the next steps.
- **Contracting** – Your Nightlight adoption advocate will begin contract negotiations with the involved child welfare agency. The adoption subsidy for the family will be included as part of the contract negotiations.
- **Visitation** – Your Nightlight adoption advocate will work with you to arrange the first visit. If the first meeting is local, a Nightlight adoption advocate may be present for the initial visit. Your Nightlight adoption advocate will be available to you to provide support as you navigate the initial visits, which may take place of several days.

- **Placement & Finalization** – Your Nightlight adoption advocate will make monthly visits to your home to ensure the placement is going well. They will provide written reports to the child’s case worker and advocate for a quick finalization. Finalization should occur between six months and one year depending on applicable state laws.

What is the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children?

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), established in 1960, establishes procedures for ensuring the safety and stability of placements of children across state lines. Once the official match has been made and before the first visit occurs, the child’s caseworker will submit the ICPC packet to the ICPC office in your state. The initial visit will not occur until the ICPC process has been approved.

How many times will we be required to travel to our child's state of residence?

After making the decision to match with the child, completing all three phases of education, and after ICPC approval, the child is told about the prospective family, and an introductory meeting is planned. You will need to travel to the child’s state of residence for this visit. The initial introduction will be with the child’s state worker. This will likely take place in an office setting or in a restaurant, such as a McDonalds. The next visit could take place later that same day or the next and is typically an outing with just the prospective family and the child.

A longer, pre-placement visit will occur soon after the initial meeting (depending on the schedule of all involved as well as the school schedule). The child will travel to the prospective family’s home with their state worker. The length of this visit will vary depending on each situation but could be from a couple of days to a couple of weeks. The child’s state worker will then take the child back to his or her foster family or residential placement. The child returns to their previous placement, even if things in the prospective adoptive placement are going well, to say goodbye, prepare for the move, and await final ICPC approval. The costs involved with these visits are typically covered by the state and are not the responsibility of the prospective adoptive family.

Can we be undergoing fertility treatments while in the adoption from foster care process?

No. To be healthy adoptive parents, you need to have completed all of your infertility treatments and given yourself the time necessary to grieve for the biological children you have dreamed of having. Only after this important step can you be truly ready to begin the adoption process. Please talk to your adoption advocate if you have any concerns about meeting this requirement.

What if we become pregnant during the adoption from foster care process?

Notify our office and your home study provider as soon as possible if you become pregnant during the adoption from foster care process. We will place your file on inactive status. Once your baby is nearing their first birthday, you may contact our office to discuss continuing your adoption plans.

Can we pursue adoption from foster care and another adoption program at the same time?

We would advise you to only pursue one program at a time; however, we do allow families to pursue simultaneous family building in certain situations. Please speak to your Nightlight adoption advocate to learn more about the possibility of pursuing multiple programs concurrently.

HOME STUDY QUESTIONS

What is a home study?

A home study is a document verifying that you qualify to adopt a child. A home study provider meets with you in your home to discuss, among other things, your background and values, the strengths of your marriage, your finances, and your reasons for adopting. It is not a "white glove" inspection.

As part of our overall services, Nightlight conducts home studies for those adopting here in the United States as well as for families interested in embryo and international adoption. (Please refer to the agency's home study documents for more details regarding the home study process). If you live in one of Nightlight's licensed areas, we will complete your home study.

How long does a home study take to complete?

A home study typically takes 8 to 16 weeks to complete, depending on how quickly a family submits their paperwork, completes their education, and on the timing of their visits with the home study provider. If you live outside of Nightlight's licensed area and are working with another provider, you will need to check with your home study agency in your state regarding time frames, which can vary from state to state.

What is an "expedited" home study?

If you need your home study completed quickly, we are able to expedite your home study for an additional fee. This is generally needed when you come to our office matched with a birth mother who is due within the next two months. We will ask for your cooperation in completing the paperwork in a rapid manner and for your flexibility when it comes time for the home study provider to schedule your visits. This cooperation and flexibility will allow us to complete your home study within the timeframe specified. Due to obtaining criminal background checks and child abuse clearances, it is not possible to complete an expedited home study in less than eight weeks.

How long is a home study valid?

Nightlight requires that all families in the adoption from foster care program update their home study annually, even if you live in a state where your home study may be valid longer.

Is a psychological evaluation required?

In general, we do not require psychological testing; however, it may be required based on your home study provider's discretion. It is important to keep in mind that in most instances in which further testing is required, the purpose is to strengthen your home study.

ADOPTION EXPENSES AND FINANCING

What would you estimate the cost for adoption from foster care to be?

The program fees are \$10,000 plus the cost of your home study which will vary depending on your state of residence. You will likely need to hire an attorney for the finalization of your adoption. An attorney for finalizing will typically cost between \$1,500 and \$5,000. In general, depending upon the individual characteristics of your adoption, your total cost will probably be between \$12,000 and \$15,500. Some states will cover the cost or provide a stipend to be used towards the attorney fees associated with the adoption finalization.

What are "Program Fees"?

Nightlight establishes a budget for costs each year based on the number of adoptions it estimates completing in each of its programs (domestic, international, adopt from foster care, and embryo) during the year. Based on these estimates, we establish program fees for adoptions in the various programs, taking into consideration the amount of staff time and expenses which will be involved in maintaining the program for the year. Of course, it would be prohibitive to allocate all of the costs (payroll, rent, insurance, supplies, etc.) to one adoption in one program. Nevertheless, we will incur those costs even if the number of adoptions is less than we estimate. Therefore, we establish program fees for each adoption program, which we believe closely relates to our actual costs in running the program – not the actual time in completing or working on a specific adoption. Program fees charged by the agency are not contingent on the successful placement of a child.

Why are fees non-refundable once paid?

Our program fees are paid in phases to enable families to budget their costs and to minimize the financial risk in the event that an adoption is not completed, or in the event that you, the adoptive parent, withdraw from the program. The program fee schedule provides for the majority of the costs to be paid close to the time when the adoptive placement occurs. As explained above, the program fees are established based on the costs to maintain a program, not on time spent on each individual adoption.

Do my program fees cover attorney expenses?

Nightlight's program fees do not cover the cost of retaining an attorney to finalize your adoption. Attorney fees can range from \$1,500 to \$5,000 to handle the adoption finalization.

Is financial assistance available?

Most families adopting from foster care will receive an adoption subsidy from the state where their child entered the foster care system. This subsidy will be negotiated as part of the contracting phase. In addition, Nightlight has a Family Resource Specialist available to help families navigate the available grants, scholarships, and adoption loans.

ADOPTION FROM FOSTER CARE RESOURCES

- Child Welfare Information Gateway, www.childwelfare.gov, is a great resource for families in any stage of the adoption process as it provides publications and links on many adoption topics.
- Tapestry Books, www.tapestrybooks.com, devoted to selling books on adoption.
- Adoption Learning Partners, www.adoptionlearningpartners.org, provides web-based educational courses to adoptive families. ALP courses range from \$30-45, and they also offer a few free courses on select topics.
- Adoptive Families Magazine, www.adoptivefamilies.org, a magazine devoted to adoption issues.
- Adopt US Kids, www.adoptuskids.org, a photo listing site of available children
- Heart Gallery of America, www.heartgalleryofamerica.org, a photo listing site of available children
- Raise the Future, www.raisethefuture.org/waiting-children, a photo listing site of available children
- America's Kids Belong, www.americaskidsbelong.org, a photo listing site of available children

- American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (AAAA), www.adoptionattorneys.org, to find an attorney in another state who can help complete your adoption.