

Snowflakes® Embryo Adoption Program

Matching with a Placing Family

Matching starts with a phone call! After completing the application phase of the program, including a Snowflakes Family Evaluation (SFE) or home study, your Snowflakes Initial Medical Screening form, and family profile, the Snowflakes Adopting Parent Coordinator will schedule a pre-matching consultation with you. During this call, you will indicate some of the characteristics that are important to you in a match with a placing family. Snowflakes also takes into consideration the embryology requirements of the referral fertility clinic of your choice.

Approximately how long does it take to be matched and to schedule the frozen embryo transfer?

- Application phase: **1-4 months**. This is dependent on the type of home study completed and the speed at which you complete the necessary documents.
- Matching phase: **2-4 months**. Typically, the more flexible adopting families are in their preferences, the less time they will wait for a match.
- Contract phase: **1-2 months**. This includes developing a communication agreement, legal document review, and the signatures of all parties.
- Shipping Phase: **1-2 months**. During this time, Snowflakes is working with the referral clinic, shipping company, and the facility where the embryos are stored to schedule pick-up, transport, and drop-off of the embryos.

In total, the timeline from application to the scheduling of the frozen embryo transfer can range from 5 to 12 months.

How are my matching preferences used?

It is important for Snowflakes to understand preferences as we endeavor to match adopting families. The pre-matching consultation will give families an opportunity to discuss these preferences with the Snowflakes Adopting Parent Coordinator. Preferences adopting families will be asked to consider are:

1. Communication – How will you establish a relationship with the placing family?
2. How many embryos are you interested in adopting?
3. Are you open to embryo sets that were created using an egg and/or sperm donor?
4. What ethnicities are you open to adopting?

The fertility clinic the adopting family has chosen from our referral clinic list has provided Snowflakes with their protocols for receiving third-party embryos into their facility. We consider these protocols carefully. They will receive detailed embryology reports to understand the history of the embryos and give you the best chance for success with your FET cycle.

Are the placing families involved in matching?

Yes! Placing families begin the matching process based upon the criteria and preferences they have provided to Snowflakes. The matching team reviews family profiles, family preferences, and fertility clinic protocol to determine if an adopting and placing family would make a good match. Once a potential match is made, the placing family will first review the adopting family's profile and communicate their desire to move forward with this family. The adopting family will then receive the placing family's profile and the medical history that has been gathered regarding the embryo set. If an egg or

sperm donor was involved, this information will be provided as well. If the adopting family agrees that the embryo set is a good fit and the referral fertility clinic agrees to accept the embryos, then it is a match!

What if it isn't the right match?

If the match does not feel like the right fit, adopting families may decline the match. *Adopting families will need to write a brief, personalized note thanking the placing family for consideration, but politely declining the match.* Your note is a helpful way for them to have closure. It is important to keep in mind that the match that was made was considered a good fit based on the adopting and placing family's criteria. Once a match has been declined, the decision is final; as additional matches are reviewed, adopting families may not request to return to a previous match.

Adopting families typically accept the first match they are presented with. However, they have the opportunity to review up to three potential matches. After three presented matches, a \$500 fee per additional match review is assessed. This fee helps offset the human resource costs expended for each additional match.

Can the adopting family specify the gender of the embryos they adopt?

The Snowflakes Program was established to help donated embryos be matched with an adopting family. Snowflakes does not allow adopting families to select embryos based upon gender.

How many embryos will adopting families be matched with?

Adopting families will adopt all of the embryos that the placing family has to donate. On average, placing families have between three and six remaining embryos. If, after the adopting family is matched with embryos, they become pregnant and deliver a baby, they continue to be responsible for any remaining adopted embryos. The expectation is that they will have subsequent FETs to give all embryos the chance at life.

Snowflakes recognizes that not all embryos will survive the thawing process. If none of the adopted embryos survive the thaw and it is therefore not possible for an FET to take place, **Snowflakes will rematch the adopting family at no charge.**

If at least *one FET* occurs with at least *one adopted embryo*, but neither a pregnancy nor live birth occurs, **Snowflakes will rematch the adoptive family at a reduced fee of \$3000.00.***

There is no way to predict the ultimate outcome of each frozen embryo transfer. ***It is our goal and hope that adoptive families will use ALL the embryos they adopt to build their family.*** However, we recognize that unforeseen circumstances sometimes arise that may prevent an adoptive family from being able to use all of their adopted embryos. Therefore, Snowflakes will include details in your embryo adoption agreement for what will happen to any remaining embryos if adoptive families decide their family is complete. We ask adoptive families to wait until their youngest child is at least *nine months old* before considering having their embryos re-matched with a new adoptive family.

What is an open embryo adoption?

Open adoption encompasses a wide spectrum of contact. It *does not* mean that adopting and placing families have to meet or exchange last names and other identifying information. It *does* mean that families select each other through a letter, biographies, and photos. Openness enables both adopting and placing families to reach out for updates or exchange

* If re-matching is a service you would like to pursue, you must notify us that you want to be matched with your next placing family within 12 months of your last FET; otherwise, you will not be eligible for the reduced fee of \$3,000.

medical information in the future. By virtue of this definition, all Snowflakes placements are considered open. Whether adopting families wish for more contact (via e-mail, phone, photos, or letters sent directly or through a third party, or in person) or less contact, Snowflakes will match them with a like-minded placing family. Nightlight Christian Adoptions, as a licensed adoption agency, keeps permanent records of all adoptions.

Most families have concerns when considering open adoption, but will grow more comfortable with the concept as they become educated about how it benefits the child, the adopting family, and the placing family. Some may also choose to be connected with another family who has been through embryo adoption and is willing to talk with others about their experience. (If you are interested in this option, please contact our office. You can also find great resources on open adoption at the [adoption education playlist](#) on YouTube.)

What are the benefits of open adoption?

The purpose of open adoption is to provide security for adopted children as they grow and begin to ask questions about their heritage and genetic origins. It provides answers, minimizing their loss of relationships by maintaining and celebrating their connections with *all* the important people in their lives (especially in an embryo adoption where the child likely has full genetic siblings). [Studies have shown](#) that open adoption helps children establish stronger self-esteem and positive feelings towards their adoption story.

Open adoption serves to provide peace of mind to the placing family because they will be told the outcome of the adoption, as well as given evidence that the child is happy and thriving, enjoying the life for which they hoped and prayed.

Open adoption also empowers the adopters in raising their child, by providing knowledge about the child's placing family and their medical history. During the home study process, families will learn of the many positive aspects of open adoption, and the home study or SFE provider will discuss the contact arrangement with which families are most comfortable. It is very important to be honest and open with this provider about the type of relationship that is envisioned with the placing family throughout the adoption and transfer process, after the child is born, and throughout his or her life.

Snowflakes® Open Hearts Program

Because every embryo deserves a chance at life.



Just as each Snowflake is unique, so is each frozen embryo. Embryo sets being placed for adoption come in all qualities and quantities, each with their own unique background. Each embryo has the potential to allow an adoptive family to achieve pregnancy and give birth!

Some embryo sets are more difficult to match with an adopting family than others. This can occur for a variety of reasons. Perhaps the embryos were frozen over 20 years ago, or maybe an embryologist, using what is often a subjective method of assigning embryo quality, assigned the embryos a lower grade. When Snowflakes has a more difficult to match set of embryos, we are encouraged by adopting families who say, *"Give us your most difficult to match embryo set and we will give them an opportunity to be born."*

To help these embryos be matched, Snowflakes and Nightlight Christian Adoptions created the Open Hearts Program. The Open Hearts Program is a way for families with a heart for adoption to say "Yes!" and open their hearts to embryos in need of a forever home.

What are the benefits of the Open Hearts Program?

Adoptive families who participate in the Open Hearts Program will adopt embryo sets that have been waiting for a family for a variety of reasons. They are opening their hearts to help frozen babies have an opportunity to be born! They are saying yes to a placing family who has been waiting for a match for their remaining embryos. They are saying yes to the potential lives of frozen embryos. Another benefit is the potential for a shorter wait time in the matching phase of the Snowflakes program.

Will fertility clinics accept these embryos?

There are fertility clinics who will accept these harder to match embryos. However, there are some who may not. There are many reasons why a fertility clinic may not accept certain embryos into their practice or complete a FET procedure with the embryos. Some embryo types they may hesitate to accept can include, but are not limited to:

1. Lower quality graded embryos
2. Embryos frozen prior to 2010
3. Slow frozen embryos
4. Re-Frozen embryos
5. Mosaic embryos or embryos with abnormal PGD/PGT-A test results

Does this mean these embryos are less likely to result in pregnancies and babies?

No, it does not. The Snowflakes program has been working with embryos of all qualities and quantities for nearly 30 years. We have seen perfectly healthy babies born from all types of embryos, including embryos who may have fallen into any one or more of the categories above. *Every* embryo deserves a chance at the full life for which they were created.

How is the matching process different through Open Hearts?

If adopting families choose to come through the Open Hearts Program, they will need to be open to any medical history in the placing family, any ethnicity, embryos created with donor gametes, and different communication levels with the placing family. This allows Snowflakes more flexibility for matching and gives adopting families potentially shorter matching times.

Can we still stipulate some matching preferences?

Yes! Adopting families can stipulate the following matching preferences through Open Hearts:

1. A minimum and maximum number of embryos they would be willing to accept.
2. The ability to decline a match if the embryo(s) have a known genetic condition or previously tested “abnormal” prior to donation to Snowflakes.
3. Openness to matching with two placing families at the same time (i.e. one placing family has one embryo, the other has two embryos, creating a total of three).
4. A soft preference in the fertility clinic who will perform the FET. While we try to match adopting families within the embryology preferences of their chosen Snowflakes referral clinic, adopting families must be open to the possibility that their embryos may only be accepted at another clinic.

Can families use any Snowflakes referral fertility clinic?

Many clinics in the U.S. will not accept embryos if they do not meet their standards (even though the embryos can result in healthy babies). However, Snowflakes has collaborated with a few clinics that are more open to the types of embryos they will accept.

To be able to match families with more flexibility, the Snowflakes matching team will determine to which of our referral clinics we can ship your adopted embryos. You are welcome to have a preferred location from these more open clinics; however, you must be willing to travel to another location if your first choice will not accept the embryos on your behalf.

Please contact your Snowflakes Inquiry Specialist for further information on our referral clinics.

Are the adoption fees the same for Open Hearts as they are for the traditional Snowflakes program?

Because we want to give each and every embryo the opportunity to be born, we have reduced the adoption fee for Open Hearts embryos by \$2,000. The Open Hearts program fee is \$6,500.

If you choose to come back through the Open Hearts Program for a re-match (see page 2 for details), the **\$3,000 re-matching fee will be waived**, even if you have had an FET with your adopted embryos.

Ask your Snowflakes Inquiry Specialist about how you can open your heart to these waiting embryos!