



Adoptions

Pima County Attorney's Office
Juvenile Division



Pima County Attorney
Juvenile Division – Adoptions
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Pima County Attorney's Office Juvenile---Adoptions

The Pima County Attorney's Juvenile Division helps families file and finalize uncontested adoptions by providing free legal services to prospective adoptive parents. This service is for adoptions by stepparents, and relatives, as well as for adoptions arranged through Child Protective Services and other adoption agencies.

Prior to starting the Adoption process:

The adoption must be uncontested and the child has to be legally free for adoption:

Documents that prove a child is legally free for adoption:

- 1) Birthparents' signed and notarized **CONSENT** to the Adoption
- 2) Severance Minute Entry from any Court showing the termination of the birthparents' parental rights.
- 3) Death Certificate of Birthparent(s)
- 4) Certificate of No File Found from the Putative Father Registry

If you are able to locate the birthparent(s) and they sign a notarized consent you can begin the Adoption Process. (see **Starting the Adoption Process.**)

Severance Process:

If you are unable to obtain a consent, and the birthfather is named on the birth certificate and/or paternity has been established, then you must complete a severance before you can proceed with an adoption. Severance is a legal term which means ending the birthparents' rights. Please note that it takes approximately 3 months to complete a severance.

If the child was born in Arizona, and the birthfather is not on the birth certificate and paternity was not established, then a check of the Putative Father Registry will suffice. This can be completed through the Adoption Program at Juvenile Court for a \$5 fee.

If you do need to complete a severance on one or both of the birth parents you can pick up a Severance Packet at the Pima County Juvenile Court Center Clerk of the Court's Office at 2225 E. Ajo Way. There is no charge for the packet but there will be publishing costs.

The Pima County Attorney's Office does not assist with the severance. Most families complete the severance on their own; however, if you prefer to get legal help with your severance, the lawyers' referral service can assist in making a recommendation. The charges for legal representation vary depending on the attorney.

Temporary Custody/Certification:

All Adoptive parents need to be certified as acceptable to adopt, with the exception of step parents, grandparents, great grandparents, aunts, uncles, or adult siblings. Your adoption agency or the Adoption Program will aide you in this process. The County Attorney's Juvenile Division will also process

Temporary Custodies for families needing to be certified to adopt a child in their custody.

Starting the Adoption Process:

Once you have an **original signed and notarized consent** in your possession, or a copy of a **certified severance minute entry**, or a **certified death certificate** for the birthparent(s) or the father is putative, you may contact the Pima County Adoptions Program at 724-2016 to request an Adoption Packet. It takes approximately 3 months to complete an adoption, once the child is legally free, and all paperwork has been submitted and completed.

Complete Paperwork and Make Appointment with the Adoption Program at Juvenile Court to

begin the Adoption process:

After receiving the Adoption Packet, complete all paperwork thoroughly and gather all requested documents. The Adoption Program charges on a sliding scale depending on income, with the most a family could be charged being \$600. When you have completed all paperwork and are prepared to pay your fee, contact the adoptions office (724-2016) to make an appointment.

According to Arizona Statutes the adoptive parents and any adult in the home 18 years of age and older (with the exception of a birth parent in a stepparent adoption) will need to be fingerprinted. This is done by the Adoptions Program for \$24 per person.

The family will participate in an interview with an adoptions social worker. The purpose of the interview is to get information about your family so that the judge can make a decision about whether or not the adoption is in the child's best interest.

Finalizing the Adoption:

Once the previous steps are completed, copies of the paperwork will be forwarded to the County Attorney's Office which will review the packet for legal sufficiency, **free of charge**.

The County Attorney's office will produce all the required legal documents and have the family come to the office to review and sign the documents. The County Attorney's Office will file the paperwork and get a final adoption hearing date. The finalization will be set within approximately 60 days to 6 months from the filing of the Adoption Petition depending on the placement date of the child. A Deputy County Attorney will appear at the finalization to represent the family. The hearing is held at the Juvenile Court and families may bring relatives, friends, etc. in order to celebrate this special occasion.

--Note that the County Attorney's Office also processes adoption for Department of Child Safety (formerly CPS) as well as some private adoption agencies **free of charge**.

The adoption process and fees through private agencies may be different than what has been mentioned above. Please contact the private agency for information on their adoption process. Families that have an open DCS case regarding the child to be adopted will need to wait until their case gets sent to the Permanency Unit before being able to start the process of adoption.

The finalization process is the same for all adoptions no matter the originating agency.

After the Adoption:

The Deputy County Attorney that appeared for the final hearing will often times take the family down to the Clerk's Office immediately following their hearing to obtain their final adoption order.

The Pima County Attorney's Office will also process the paperwork necessary in order for the family to get a new birth certificate for the adopted child. Birth Certificates will be changed to add on the adopting parent(s) and have the child(s) name(s) changed.

The Adoption Secretary is always available to help answer questions and help families as much as possible along the way.