

## Growing Your Family Through Adoption

One of the most rewarding areas of law in which our lawyers practice is the area of adoption. Our lawyers understand the significance of adding a child or children to your family and will ensure that your adoption is handled with precision and professionalism. While always a joyous occasion when finalizing an adoption, at times getting to the finalization stage can be difficult emotionally, financially and legally. We understand these challenges and have years of experience in meeting them.

## Private Adoptions

We can assist you with all aspects of a private adoption from facilitating the placement of a child in your home and ensuring that all legal requirements for such placement and later adoption are satisfied, to ensuring that a child who has already been in your care remains in your care and ultimately becomes a legal part of your family.

## Stepparent and Family Adoptions

With the changing dynamic of the family, many family members are assisting with the rearing of the children of relatives including grandchildren, nieces, nephews and stepchildren. Often, these situations, which are initially temporary, become permanent in nature and, as such, families wish to solidify and legalize their relationship with the child or children they are caring for. In these situations, a family adoption can be completed for you and, if all parties are in agreement, can be completed quickly, easily and inexpensively. Even in situations where all parties are not in agreement, an adoption can be finalized following a termination proceeding. Our attorneys are experienced in the termination of parental rights, whether by consent or otherwise, and consider it a privilege to be able to assist families in legalizing the addition of a child to their family.

## Collaborating with Child Placement and Adoption Agencies

In addition to private and family adoptions, our attorneys work closely with the Lancaster County Children and Youth Social Service Agency and other placement and adoption agencies in order to finalize adoptions for families who have children placed in their homes through such agencies. Adoption finalizations are typically simple proceedings which can be completed for a flat fee, which fee is often subsidized through the Statewide Adoption Network, thereby allowing families to adopt with little to no expense to them. We are privileged to have long standing relationships with many child placement and adoption agencies locally and across the United States and welcome the opportunity to assist any family with the finalization of their adoption.

## Termination of Parental Rights and Contested Adoptions

While finalizing an adoption can be one of the most rewarding aspects of practicing in the area of adoption law, getting to the finalization stage can often be difficult and confusing. Because adoptions cannot occur until the parental rights of the biological parents have been terminated by agreement or otherwise, often legal representation is needed in order to terminate the parental rights of the biological parent or parents. Such termination can occur by agreement whereby biological parents will execute consents to the termination of their parental rights and the adoption of their child or, in the alternative, rights can be terminated by an involuntary termination proceeding. Our attorneys are well-versed in adoption law and have years of experience in terminating parental rights, both by consent and involuntarily. They are also experienced in handling numerous adoptions where biological family members have intervened. Our attorneys understand the emotional fragility of families going through the termination process and the importance of being successful so that the child to be adopted has permanency and security. Our attorneys will guide you through the process of termination to ensure that a final adoption can be achieved. When a termination is contested or, in the alternative, a biological family member intervenes in the finalization of an adoption, our

attorneys will advocate aggressively for your rights and the rights of your child.

## International Adoptions

Many families have the pleasure of adding a child of international origin to their family. We are pleased to offer services to finalize your child's international adoption or, if his or her adoption was finalized in his or her country of origin, to conduct re-adoption proceedings in the United States in order that your child of international origin can change his or her name and/or secure a Pennsylvania birth certificate. Our attorneys have experience in international adoptions from various countries around the world and will work with you and your agency to make the adoption or re-adoption process flawless.

### Recent Updates & Recommended Articles from the Lancaster Law Blog:

#### Top 10 Things I Should Ask My Caseworker When Considering Adoption

*When families consider adoption, they have many choices and many decisions. Families can utilize a private adoption agency, where they can provide information to be included in a profile for birth parents to review and determine if that family should be the adoptive resource for their child. Private agencies charge a fee for their services. Families can also adopt through local social service agencies where children are placed because they are dependent. In those cases, no fees are paid to these social service agencies and instead, when children are placed for foster care, and/or adoption, often subsidies are paid to the family for the care of the child placed in their home. Both options result in adoption opportunities for many families, but it is always best to have a full understanding of the process.*

#### We Can Finally Finalize Our Adoption: What Now? – Part I of II

*Many of my families who are fostering to adopt children through the Dependency System spend months to years waiting for the day when their foster child is legally free for adoption. Many of those families have experienced pain, turmoil, disappointment, frustration, and always, the joy of raising a beautiful child. However, when they meet with me to move forward with the finalization of their adoption, they simply cannot believe that the process of doing so is as easy as I tell them that it is.*

#### Finally – the Finalization of an Adoption Part II of II

*Adoptive parents testimony is typically a recitation of the information contained in an Adoption Petition, and is simply comprised of each parties' own biographical information, including your name, address, date of birth, age, place of birth, occupation, religious affiliation, racial background, date of marriage, and the first names and ages of any other biological or adoptive children. The adoption then requires confirmation of additional information, which I always refer to as "the silly questions."*

## Attorneys

- Holly S. Filius
- Lindsay M. Schoeneberger

## Range of Services

- Adoption Finalization
- Open Adoptions
- Agency Adoption
- Step-Parent Adoption
- Private Adoption
- International Adoption
- Registration of Foreign Adoption Decrees
- Termination of Parental Rights
- Confirmation of Consent Proceedings
- Involuntary Termination Proceedings
- Contested Adoption
- Adoptions with Intervening Parties
- Family Agreements
- Adoption Subsidies & Tax Credits
- Guardianships/Permanent Legal Guardianships
- Name Changes

## Related Services

- Family Law
- Custody
- Estate Planning & Wills

## Helpful Links

- Child Welfare Information Gateway

# Adoption

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