

Military Families Considering Adoption

Military families who adopt primarily go through the same processes as civilian families. [Military OneSource](#), a program for the military community funded by U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), provides information and support on [adoption](#) to help your family navigate procedures common to all prospective adoptive parents as well as some that are unique to military families. This factsheet provides an overview of adoption processes that are specific to families with one or more service members.

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THE ADOPTION PROCESS

The adoption process varies depending on whether you are currently stationed in the United States or overseas. In either case, you can begin by speaking with a Military OneSource [adoption consultant](#) about your family's desire to adopt. They can help you understand the adoption process specific to your family, locate an agency that works with military families, identify resources to help defray the costs of adoption, and direct you to benefits and support services available before and after an adoption is finalized.

RESOURCES ON ADOPTION SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MILITARY FAMILIES

- [Adoption Resources for Military Families](#) provides links to information about free assistance to military families stationed in the United States or overseas who are seeking to adopt children from foster care, additional assistance for military families, and other useful information about adoption.
- [Adoption Options for Members of the Military](#) (also available as a [webinar](#)) answers common questions military families have about adoption, such as "Where do we begin in the adoption process?" and "Can we adopt while one parent is on active duty?"
- [National Military Family Association – Adoption](#) contains helpful suggestions and information on reimbursement, leave, and health care for military families who are beginning the adoption process.
- [Wherever My Family Is: That's Home! Adoption Services for Military Families](#) offers a detailed guide for quality and timely adoption services available for military families and much more information, including specific steps in the adoption process.

- [Adoption – The Essentials](#) includes information about qualified adoption expenses, primary caregiver leave, and eligibility for military health benefits for military families.
- [Defense Finance and Accounting Service – Adoption Reimbursement](#) outlines requirements and limitations for adoption reimbursement and provides useful links for further information.
- [State of Residence vs. Home of Record: What Does It All Mean?](#) details the significance of State of residence for military members and how to change it.

Basic steps in the adoption process depend on whether you are stationed in the United States or abroad.

1. **Understand applicable laws.** [Laws governing your adoption](#) depend on where your family is stationed and where the child you wish to adopt lives. For example:

NOTE: Families stationed in countries party to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) should consult the country's [Central Authority](#) for specific details involved in the adoption of a child in the United States. If the Convention does apply to such an adoption, requirements regarding adoption agencies and home studies referenced below would change. Information on processing a Convention adoption of a child in the United States to another Convention country is available on the U.S. Department of State's [Intercountry Adoption](#) website and its [country-specific](#) web sections.

Stationed in the United States	Stationed Overseas
If adopting a child living in a State other than the one where you are stationed, the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) applies. If you adopt a child from your State of legal residence, even if it is different from the State where you are stationed, ICPC does not apply.	If adopting while stationed overseas, you will use your State of legal residence. ICPC applies as if you are stationed in the United States, that is, if you adopt a child who lives in a State other than your State of legal residence.

2. **Find an adoption agency.** When [locating an agency](#), take into account the adoption services your family needs. Military OneSource [adoption consultants](#) can help you find agencies that specialize in military adoptions. When choosing an adoption agency:

Stationed in the United States	Stationed Overseas
Choose a public or a licensed private agency or an attorney (“independent adoption”).	Choose an agency that works specifically with U.S. citizens living abroad.

3. **Complete a home study.** Your adoption agency will help you complete a [home study](#), which involves educating and preparing your family for adoption.

Stationed in the United States	Stationed Overseas
It must be conducted by a social worker or agency licensed in your State.	It must be completed and approved by a social worker licensed in the United States.
It may require criminal background checks for every State in which you have lived.	If documents require a notary, you may need to contact the issuing State or county to get them.

4. **Prepare for matching and placement of your child.** The time it takes for a child to be matched with your family and placed in your home depends on the [type of adoption](#) and agency you select and on the country where you and your child live.

Stationed in the United States	Stationed Overseas
Preplacement visits may help a child adopted from foster care transition into your family.	Families may need to travel to the home State of the child to meet and visit with them.

Working With Child Welfare Professionals

Depending on your child welfare professional's knowledge of military culture, you may encounter questions about how often your family moves or how you will provide a stable environment for a child. Refer the social worker to Child Welfare Information Gateway's bulletin, [Working With Military Families as They Pursue Adoption](#). Inform them that the military provides a high level of consistency and family support, including access to the same health insurance and health care, regardless of where they live.

MILITARY FAMILY ADOPTION ISSUES

Military families may face unique issues that could affect the adoption process, such as a permanent change of station (PCS) or deployment overseas.

PCS ORDERS

If your family receives orders for a PCS during the adoption process, some of your home study documents may transfer to an agency near your new home or installation. Many agencies, however, require a new home study using their forms and protocols.

If your family has already been matched with a child in the State where you are currently stationed, but you have received orders to move out of State, you will need approval to

move the child and complete the adoption. The child welfare professional you're working with will help you understand and fulfill the ICPC requirements. After you have legally adopted your child, your family will be free to move to different States.

Support for Military Families With Special Needs

Many children eligible for adoption have special needs. The DoD's [Exceptional Family Member Program](#) (EFMP) helps families with a member who has particular medical or educational needs—before, during, and after transfer or PCS orders. EFMP also helps you navigate health-care and educational systems by providing information and referrals. Your family must first enroll in this program for your child's special needs to be considered.

Use [EFMP & Me](#), an online tool for military families with special needs, to find services or resources for your family.

DEPLOYMENT DURING THE ADOPTION PROCESS

If you are deployed during the adoption process, keep your command informed about your adoption process to ensure essential documents are completed and delivered in a timely way. The spouse (or other family member) remaining at home also should have a mailing address for the military member during deployment as well as a method for reaching them in an emergency.

Some parts of the adoption process can be facilitated by granting power of attorney to your spouse (or other family member). However, your home study will require at least one personal interview. If you know you will be deploying, you may work with your social worker to schedule an interview before leaving. Another possible predeployment step includes completing fingerprints for background checks.

A single parent or one member of a military couple who is close to finalizing an adoption may request a deployment deferment or extension of assignment. This deferment is more likely to be granted after a child has been placed in your home.

CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION GATEWAY RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

- [How to Adopt](#)
- [Adopting as a Single Parent](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions From LGBTQ+ Prospective Foster and Adoptive Parents](#)
- [Adopting Children From Other States or Jurisdictions](#)
- [Intercountry Adoption: What Do I Need to Know?](#)
- [National Foster Care & Adoption Directory](#)
- [State Statutes Search](#)
- [The Impact of Adoption](#)
- [Parenting After Adoption](#)

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