



GUIDE · CALIFORNIA

Adoption document checklist

The paperwork California adoptions actually ask for, grouped by type of adoption, with who issues each document and how long it tends to take.

Current as of September 2026 · General information for families in California, not legal advice.

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How to use this checklist

Start with the list for every adoptive parent, then add the list for your type of adoption. You will not need every item, and a court or home study provider may ask for something not listed here, so treat this as a starting point rather than the final word.

Wherever a certificate or court order is listed, order a **certified copy**, not a photocopy. Order two of anything issued by a government office: one goes to the court or the social worker, and one stays in your file.

Keep your documents safe. Do not email identity documents, fingerprint results or court orders. Clients of the firm upload them through the secure client portal, and we tell you exactly which items we need before you start gathering them.

For every adoptive parent

- ☐ Government-issued photo ID for each adoptive parent: driver's license, state ID card or passport.
- ☐ If you are adopting as a couple, a certified marriage certificate, or a Certificate of Registered Domestic Partnership from the California Secretary of State.
- ☐ Certified copies of any earlier divorce or dissolution judgments, and a death certificate for any former spouse who has died.
- ☐ The child's certified birth certificate.
- ☐ Any existing custody, guardianship or dependency court orders about the child.

- ☐ Proof of where you live, such as a lease, mortgage statement or utility bill. It helps show which county's court can hear the case.
- ☐ Your answers about any possible Native American ancestry of the child or either birth parent. Courts ask this in every adoption, usually on form ICWA-010(A).
- ☐ The court forms we prepare with you: the Adoption Request (ADOPT-200), the Adoption Agreement (ADOPT-210, signed at the hearing) and the Adoption Order (ADOPT-215, signed by the judge).

Who issues what, and how long it takes

Typical sources and lead times

Document	Who issues it	Allow
Certified California birth certificate	The county recorder where the birth took place (in Los Angeles County, the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk), or CDPH Vital Records	County: days to a few weeks. State: often several weeks or more
Certified marriage certificate	The county recorder where the marriage license was issued	Days to a few weeks
Registered domestic partnership certificate	California Secretary of State	A few weeks
Certified court orders	The clerk of the court that made the order	Often same day in person; longer by mail
Live Scan fingerprints (California DOJ and FBI)	Any Live Scan operator, using the request form from your investigator or home study provider	Appointment within days; results in days to weeks
Child Abuse Central Index check	California Department of Justice, requested by your investigator or provider	Several weeks
Medical statement	Your own doctor, on the provider's form	One appointment
Home study or investigation report	The California Department of Social Services, a county agency or a licensed adoption agency, depending on the type of adoption	Typically two to four months for a full home study
Interstate approval (ICPC)	The compact offices of both states	Often 7–14 business days after the birth
Certified translations	A professional translator who certifies the translation	Days to weeks

These are typical ranges, not promises. Government offices change their processing times, so check each office's website before you order.

Stepparent or domestic partner adoption

- ☐ The other birth parent's written consent, signed in front of an official the law allows. In California that is a county clerk, probation officer, qualified court investigator or county welfare department staff member; a parent living outside California can usually sign before a notary ([Cal. Fam. Code § 9003](#)).
- ☐ If the other parent will not or cannot consent: records that show why consent is not needed, such as a year of unpaid support and no contact, or an order ending that parent's rights. Payment histories and messages matter here.
- ☐ If the other parent has died: a certified death certificate.

- ☐ Consent of the child, if the child is 12 or older. It is given at the hearing (Cal. Fam. Code § 8602).
- ☐ Information for the court's investigator, who usually interviews the family. The investigation is often not needed where the child was born during your marriage or domestic partnership (Cal. Fam. Code § 9000.5).

Relative adoption through the dependency court

When a child has been in the Los Angeles County dependency system, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) holds much of the file and gives key documents to the court. You will usually still need:

- ☐ Your Resource Family Approval paperwork.
- ☐ The order terminating parental rights, or confirmation that the court has chosen adoption as the child's permanent plan.
- ☐ The adoptive placement agreement.
- ☐ An Adoption Assistance Program agreement, if the child qualifies. Arrange it **before** the adoption is finalised.
- ☐ A Contact After Adoption Agreement (ADOPT-310), if you and the birth family agree to ongoing contact.

Independent (private) infant adoption

- ☐ Your approved pre-placement home study, and the independent adoption investigation carried out by the California Department of Social Services or an agency acting for it.
- ☐ Live Scan and Child Abuse Central Index results for every adult in your home.
- ☐ The birth parents' signed consent, which cannot be signed until after the birth mother has left the hospital (Cal. Fam. Code § 8801.3), and any signed waiver of the right to revoke (Cal. Fam. Code § 8814.5).
- ☐ Confirmation that each birth parent was advised of their rights by an adoption service provider.
- ☐ The birth family's health and social history, as far as it is known.
- ☐ A full accounting of every payment made in connection with the adoption, on the Adoption Expenses form (ADOPT-230) (Cal. Fam. Code § 8610).
- ☐ The hospital release paperwork allowing the baby to leave with you.
- ☐ Interstate (ICPC) approval, if the baby is born in another state.
- ☐ Information about the birth father: whether he is a presumed or alleged father, and his consent or proof that he received notice.

Agency adoption

The agency prepares much of the court file, including the birth parents' relinquishments and its own report to the court. From you, expect:

- ☐ Everything your home study provider asks for, and the approved home study itself.
- ☐ The placement agreement you signed with the agency.
- ☐ Reports from the post-placement visits.

- ☐ An Adoption Assistance Program agreement, if the child qualifies.

Adult adoption

- ☐ Photo ID for the adoptive parent and for the adult being adopted.
- ☐ The written adoption agreement, signed by both of you.
- ☐ The written consent of the adoptive parent's spouse, if the adoptive parent is married and not lawfully separated.
- ☐ The written consent of the spouse of the person being adopted, if they are married and not lawfully separated.
- ☐ Any change of name you want the order to include.

Birth parents do not need to consent to an adult adoption, and there is usually no home study.

Readoption after an intercountry adoption

- ☐ The foreign adoption decree, with a certified English translation.
- ☐ The child's foreign birth certificate, with a certified translation.
- ☐ The child's immigrant visa and green card, and the Certificate of Citizenship if one has been issued.
- ☐ The home study report and at least one post-placement visit report. California requires both before it grants a readoption ([Cal. Fam. Code § 8919](#)).
- ☐ Passports for the child and for each adoptive parent.
- ☐ Any change of name you want the order to include.

Sources

- [Cal. Fam. Code § 8602](#)
- [Cal. Fam. Code § 8610](#)
- [Cal. Fam. Code § 8801.3](#)
- [Cal. Fam. Code § 8814.5](#)
- [Cal. Fam. Code § 8919](#)
- [Cal. Fam. Code § 9000.5](#)
- [Cal. Fam. Code § 9003](#)
- [California Courts Self-Help Guide: Adoptions](#)
- [California Department of Public Health: Vital Records adoption process](#)

This is general information about California law as of September 2026. It is not legal advice, and reading it does not create an attorney–client relationship. The law changes and every family's situation is different, so please get advice about your own circumstances before acting on it.