



What to expect at your adoption hearing

The day the adoption becomes final. What happens in the courtroom, who needs to be there, what to bring and what comes next.

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

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What the hearing is

Finalisation is the hearing where a judge grants the adoption. By the time you receive a date, the hard work is almost always done: consents are in place, reports have been filed and the judge has read them. The hearing itself is usually short, and most families remember it as a celebration.

The adoption is complete when the judge signs the Adoption Order. From that moment you are the child's parent for every purpose.

Where it happens

In Los Angeles County, adoption hearings are generally held at the Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court in Monterey Park. Your hearing notice gives the exact courthouse, department and time. If you live in another county, the hearing is usually in that county's superior court.

Each November, the Los Angeles Superior Court takes part in National Adoption Day, when many adoptions are finalised together. If you would like your hearing to be part of it, ask us early.

Who needs to be there

- **Each adoptive parent.** California expects adoptive parents to appear in person ([Cal. Fam. Code § 8612](#)). If someone cannot attend, for example because of military deployment, tell us as early as possible so we can ask the court about alternatives.
- **The child.** Children usually attend. A child aged 12 or over must consent to the adoption ([Cal. Fam. Code § 8602](#)).
- **Your attorney.**
- **The social worker**, sometimes, in agency and dependency adoptions.

- **Guests.** Family and friends are usually welcome, space permitting. Ask us about numbers, because some courtrooms are small.

In the courtroom, step by step

1. **Arrive early.** Allow time for parking and for security screening, which works much like an airport.
2. **Check in** with the courtroom clerk or bailiff, with your name and case number.
3. **Your case is called.** You may be sworn in and asked a few simple questions, usually whether you understand that adoption is permanent and that you will care for the child as your own.
4. **You sign the Adoption Agreement** (ADOPT-210) in front of the judge, agreeing to treat the child as your lawful child.
5. **A child aged 12 or over** signs to consent.
6. **The judge signs the Adoption Order** (ADOPT-215). The adoption is final.
7. **Photographs.** Many judges invite families to take photographs, sometimes with the judge. Ask the bailiff before taking any, because each judge sets the rules for their courtroom.

What to bring

- ☐ Government photo ID for every adult who will sign.
- ☐ Your hearing notice and case number.
- ☐ Any documents your attorney has asked you to bring.
- ☐ Something quiet to keep younger children busy while you wait.
- ☐ A phone or camera, for photographs if the judge allows them.

Leave at home anything that will not pass security, such as knives, scissors or pepper spray.

What to wear

There is no dress code beyond what is respectful in court. Many families dress as they would for a special occasion, and children often wear something that makes them feel good. Avoid clothing with slogans, and dress small children for a wait.

After the hearing

- **Certified copies of the order.** Ask the clerk how to order them. You will need them for Social Security, passports, schools, insurance and benefits. We suggest at least three.
- **The new birth certificate.** The state registrar issues it after receiving the report of the adoption. It can take several months, and we tell you when to follow up.
- **Everything else.** Our guide *After the decree* lists the records and benefits to update.
- **Celebrate.** You have earned it.

Sources

- [Cal. Fam. Code § 8602](#)
- [Cal. Fam. Code § 8612](#)
- [Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles: Adoptions](#)

- [California Courts Self-Help Guide: Adoptions](#)

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.