

Introduction to Adoption Language and Vocabulary

Adoption	The legal process in which a child becomes a member of an adoptive family as though he/she were born into that family. Adoption is a means of providing caring and responsible parents for children who need them.
Adoptive Parent	A parent who legally and emotionally assumes all rights and responsibilities for a child through adoption, as though that child was born to him/her.
Birth Parent	The biological parent of a child. <i>Appropriate Language Note: "Birth Parent", not "Real Parent")</i>
Triad (Adoption)	Refers to the unique adoption relationship and connection between the adoptee, birth parent(s), and the adoptive parents.
Home Study	A written family assessment written by a qualified worker and submitted to court with the petition for adoption or guardianship. Includes the background, motivation, and stability; assesses the strengths of a family and their readiness for adoption.
Finalization	The term used to denote the completion of the legal adoption process, as marked by a court hearing and signed decree of adoption.
Open Adoption	A term used to describe on-going contact, either directly or indirectly through an intermediary, between birth families and adoptive parents.
Relinquishment	A legal procedure whereby a birthparent surrenders custody, rights, responsibilities and parenting relationship with a child.
TPR	Termination of Parental Rights: A legal process in which a birth parent's rights and responsibilities are severed, either voluntarily or involuntarily.
GAL	Guardian Ad Litem: An attorney for the child who represents a child's best interests in court proceedings.
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act: The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, is a Federal law that governs jurisdiction over the removal of Native American (Indian) children from their families in custody, foster care and adoption cases.
Legal Risk	Parental Rights for the child have not been terminated and the child is not considered legally free for adoption.
Legally Free	Parental rights for the birth parents have been terminated.
PPS	Permanency Planning Specialist. This is the OCS Adoption Specialist for each of the five regions in Alaska.