



National  
Down Syndrome  
Adoption Network  
*planning for a loving future*



*A Loving Choice:  
Making an Adoption Plan for a Child  
with Down Syndrome*

## *What is the National Down Syndrome Adoption Network?*

All children benefit from the opportunity to grow up in a loving family, but not all birth families feel they are able to meet the needs of a child born with Down syndrome.

The National Down Syndrome Adoption Network provides information to birth families who may be seeking alternatives to parenting as they prepare for the arrival of their child. Making an adoption plan for a child with Down syndrome is a **loving** choice and can be the **right** choice for some families.

The NDSAN is also here to provide support to families who wish to adopt a child with Down syndrome.

**There are no fees for any of the services provided by the National Down Syndrome Adoption Network.**

Our mission is to ensure that every child born with Down syndrome has the opportunity to grow up in a loving family.





## *What is Down Syndrome?*

Down syndrome is a genetic condition which is the most commonly occurring chromosomal abnormality. It occurs in 1 out of every 733 births and affects people of all races and economic levels.

A baby with Down syndrome, for unknown reasons, will have three copies of the 21st chromosome instead of two. That is why Down syndrome is also called Trisomy 21.

Children with Down syndrome are born with an extra 21st chromosome. They usually have some degree of developmental delay. They may be born with additional medical issues such as heart problems. Many of these conditions are correctable or treatable. Children with Down syndrome can learn, go to school, participate in family and community activities.

There are approximately 350,000 individuals with Down Syndrome in the US.

## *Considering an Adoption Plan for Your Child?*

When a family does not feel they are in a good situation to parent a child with Down syndrome, they may want to consider adoption. Many families across the United States are choosing to adopt children with Down syndrome of all ages. Those families are entered in the NDSAN Registry. Connecting families who wish to adopt with those families who want to choose an adoption plan for their child is our main focus.



*"I just wanted to simply say thanks... sometimes the loss seems tremendous... but then I picture Nicholas with his adoptive family and I see a beautiful picture that look and feels so right."*

## *Frequently Asked Questions from Parents Considering Releasing Their Child for Adoption*

Who are the Parents in the Registry?

Adoptive families who register with the NDSAN may come from anywhere in the United States. They are families that specifically want to adopt a child with Down syndrome. Some are first time parents, others are experienced families that include many children. Some choose to adopt a child because they have a sibling or other relative with Down syndrome. Many who work in the special education or therapy field are interested in adopting children with Down syndrome as well.



*“Benjamin is such a joy to our family;  
we feel very blessed to have him.”*

*“You helped find our sweet little Jared almost 4 years ago.  
He is the joy in our lives.”*

## *How Do I Know They Are Safe?*

All families who adopt a child must have a home study completed by a licensed agency in their home state. The “home study” will include criminal background checks, medical reports and financial statements along with verification of the family’s living arrangements, parenting skills, and extended family history.

Families who register with the NDSAN must have a completed home study or be in the process of completing or updating their home study.



*“We are so excited to be part of this journey with you, and we are privileged that you have considered us for adoptive parents for your precious child.”*

*“Please be assured that your daughter will be loved beyond measure, and will always be safe and with someone who loves her.”*

*Why Would Anyone Choose to do  
What I am Finding So Difficult?*

Receiving the news that your baby has a diagnosis of Down syndrome can be devastating for birth parents who are unprepared for that news. Families who chose to adopt a child with Down syndrome are coming from a very different perspective. They are usually familiar and often experienced with what the diagnosis of Down syndrome can mean. They know the joys, as well as the challenges, and are able to embrace the possibilities. Many birth parents will gain that perspective as well, as time goes on. For some however, adoption offers a positive and loving choice.

*“For all those countless hours, including talking with us for  
hours on the phone, referring us to families...  
from the bottom of our hearts, we thank you.”*





## *Will I Be Able to Have Contact with My Child After the Adoption?*

Birth families can choose from a variety of options as they consider the future. If they choose to make an adoption plan, a birth parent can decide if they want to continue to have contact with the adoptive family and to maintain a relationship with their child. While adoption is a legally binding relationship that gives full responsibility for parenting the child to the adoptive family, many adoptive families are quite comfortable continuing to maintain visits with the birth family and to keep the birth family involved in the life of the child. Other types of “open adoption” include contact by letters, emails and pictures on a regular basis. For birth families that want minimal or no contact, that is also an option.

*“Open adoption was the one priority my sister insisted upon. Continued contact with the adoptive family with letters, pictures and perhaps a yearly visit was essential”.*

## *How Long Will the Process Take Once I Make My Decision?*

It is possible to plan for an adoption at any point during the pregnancy. If the diagnosis is made after the birth, an adoption plan can be made as well, if needed. But the actual paperwork involved in releasing a child for adoption can only occur after the birth of the child. Some states have a required period of time after the birth before a relinquishment can be signed. The adoptive family can be involved and present at the birth or soon after if the birth family wishes for them to be involved right away.



*“As difficult and sad as it was to make such a major decision like this, we are very at peace with our decision. We are grateful for all our blessings. We have learned to accept our limitations and believe our decision to give Katie to Jeff and Karen was one made out of love. “*

## *How Do I Share This Decision with My Extended Family?*

Adoption is a loving choice for a child whose birth family does not feel they are in a position to parent. But extended families may not be supportive of that decision. Many birth families choose to share their adoption plan, and their reasons for making such a plan, prior to the birth of the baby. The NDSAN is always willing to speak with or share information with extended family members who may have questions about adoption.



*“You have played a significant role in my daughter and son-in-law’s lives these last few months. Our prayers have been intertwined with your love and actions, and our little baby has been blessed.”*



### *How Do I Handle This with My Baby's Siblings?*

Having an open adoption can allow birth siblings to remain in contact. Continuing a relationship, even through letters or pictures, can be reassuring to siblings separated by an adoption plan. Birth parents need to make it very clear that their choice to make an adoption plan for their child with Down syndrome was based on their desire for this child with very special needs to grow up in a family that was equipped with the resources to meet those needs. Loving families make loving choices for their children, even though they are not always easy choices.



## *What if I Change My Mind?*

The birth family always has the ability to “change their mind” about the adoption plan prior to signing the relinquishment paperwork, which is only signed after the birth of the child. Most states have a period of time required before the finalization of the adoption in court. During that period of time, the birth family can also ask for the birth child to be returned.

While the loss of the child through an adoption disruption is painful, adoptive families recognize that it is not uncommon for birth families to “fall in love” with their baby when they have the opportunity to hold him or her in their arms. Our goal is to insure that every child born with Down syndrome has the opportunity to grow up in a loving family, even when that “family” turns out to be the “birth family”!



## *What if the Baby is misdiagnosed and NOT born with Down Syndrome?*

Families who register with the NDSAN want to adopt a child with Down Syndrome. If a baby, believed to have Down Syndrome, is born without the diagnosis, the adoptive family would only remain involved if the birth family desired to continue the adoption process.



## *Can an Adoption Plan be Made for an Older Child with Down Syndrome?*

Yes! Families who register with the NDSAN indicate the ages of the children they will consider. We have quite a few families waiting to adopt children with Down syndrome of all ages...even teenagers!

## *Can I Talk with Other Birth Parents Who Have Made an Adoption Plan for a Child with Down Syndrome?*

If it would be helpful to talk with a family that has made an adoption plan for an infant with Down syndrome, the NDSAN can provide that link. Just contact NDSAN for a referral.



*“We now know quite a bit about Down Syndrome and can be a resource for others in our situation who must make important decisions.”*

*“We can serve as gentle advocates for the appropriateness of considering an adoption plan... and for the availability of loving and appropriate families.*

*“If you need a family to share their experience with adoption, we are more than happy to talk with them, just like other families did with us.”*

## *Resources*

The National Down Syndrome Adoption Network  
[www.ndsan.org](http://www.ndsan.org)

National Down Syndrome Congress  
[www.ndsccenter.org](http://www.ndsccenter.org)

National Down Syndrome Society  
[www.ndss.org](http://www.ndss.org)

Down Syndrome Pregnancy  
[www.dspregnancy.org](http://www.dspregnancy.org)

## *Notes*

The National Down Syndrome Adoption Network is committed to providing support for families who are considering an adoption plan for their child, and for families who would like to adopt a child with Down syndrome.



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Adoption Line: 513-213-9615  
Fax: 513-554-4486

[www.ndsan.org](http://www.ndsan.org)  
[www.facebook.com/dsadoption](http://www.facebook.com/dsadoption)



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