



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN  
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

# Glossary of Terms

# The Adoption Authority of Ireland

## Glossary of General Terms A-Z

Welcome to our glossary of general terms.

Adoption is a life-changing process for everyone involved. It needs to be underpinned by a strong legal process to protect everyone's rights. It's important, therefore, that any information we provide is as clear as possible.

We have compiled this glossary to help to make adoption information clearer and more user-friendly. We hope you find it helpful.

### A

**AAI:** the Adoption Authority of Ireland.

**Accredited Body or Agency:** a body authorised by the Adoption Authority of Ireland to carry out functions regarding adoption. For example, Tusla – Child and Family Agency is an agency accredited to assess couples for intercountry adoption (adopting a child from abroad).

**Active Trace:** a search carried out by the Adoption Authority of Ireland, Tusla - Child and Family Agency, or another accredited agency. The agency tries to make contact with the subject of the search – either the adopted person or a birth family member – in order to share information or perhaps organise a reunion.

**Act, the – The Adoption Act 2010:** the most recent Irish law or legislation on adoption.

**Adoption Society:** a name no longer in use for certain bodies, often founded by religious orders, which carried out adoptions in the past. These societies are now known as Accredited Bodies.

**Adoptee:** an adopted person.

**Adoption Certificate:** a certified copy of the entry in the Adopted Children's Register or the Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA). It is legal proof of an adoption. It is the equivalent of a birth certificate and should be accepted as such for legal or administrative purposes.

**Adopted Children's Register:** a listing of children adopted in Ireland. The Adopted Children's Register is maintained by the General Register Office (GRO) in Roscommon.

**Affinity, by:** a relationship to another person through marriage. For example, a person is related by affinity to their spouse's family – mother-in-law, brother-in-law and so on.

**Adoption Order:** a legal order giving an adopted person full legal standing in their adoptive family. Adoption in Ireland is ‘full’, meaning the birth parents and the child no longer have any legal relationship or ties. Full adoption is sometimes called ‘plenary’ adoption.

**Applicants or Apps:** people applying to adopt a child. Sometimes abbreviations are used – for example, **MAP** for a male applicant, **FAP** for a female applicant, or **PAPs** for prospective adoptive parents.

**Assessment:** see **Home Study Report**.

**Assessment Agency:** an accredited body whose social workers carry out the assessment as to whether prospective adoptive parents are eligible and suitable to adopt.

**Authenticated or Apostilled:** see **Foreign Affairs**

## B

**Background Information:** personal or ‘life’ information about the birth mother, such as her age, family background and religion. Also see **Non-Identifying Information**.

**Best Interest of the Child:** a term referring to legal decisions made about adoptions based on the wellbeing – the ‘best interests’ – of the child.

**Biological Parent:** the parent who has either physically given birth (biological mother) or physically fathered (biological father) a child.

**Birth Parent:** biological mother or father.

**Birth Sibling:** an adoptee’s brother or sister from their biological parent or parents. They may be a ‘half’ or ‘full’ sibling. A half sibling shares one parent; a full sibling shares both.

**Boarded Out:** historical practice, similar to fostering, of placing a child in a family home.

## C

**Care Order:** a court order granted to remove a child from the parents’ custody when the child is thought to be at risk. The child is placed into foster care or residential care. The length of time varies depending on the circumstances. In some cases, it might be until the child turns 18. In these situations, Tusla – Child and Family Agency is given the authority to make decisions for the child as if Tusla were the child’s parents.

**Central Authority for Adoption:** a country’s national adoption agency under that country’s law. In Ireland, it is the Adoption Authority of Ireland.

**Certified Copy:** a true copy of a document endorsed by a solicitor or notary (a lawyer) or a peace commissioner.

**Certified Copy of an Entry:** also known as a 'Cert' – for example, an adoption cert or birth cert.

**CFA:** the Child and Family Agency. See also **Tusla – Child & Family Agency**.

**Counselling:** professional advice and guidance about personal plans or problems. Counselling from the Adoption Authority of Ireland with regard to information and tracing can involve meeting with a social worker to discuss how a person feels about contacting birth relatives, the changes it might bring to their life, and to decide on what level of contact and information they would like. With regard to intercountry adoption, it can involve discussing a referral.

**Consent:** permission or agreement. In adoption matters, it is a necessary approval given in writing by birth parents or guardians on an official consent form.

**Consent Form:** an official form signed by a relevant person, usually the birth mother, giving permission for an adoption to take place.

**Consulting (or Notifying):** the requirement to tell certain people – for example, birth fathers – about the proposed adoption so that their opinion can be heard and considered.

**Contact Register:** see **NACPR**.

**Country of Choice:** the country chosen by applicants during assessment for intercountry adoption. Since 2010, the chosen country must be a 'Hague Compliant' country – that is, a country that has ratified the Hague Convention. See **Hague Convention**.

**Court Order / Court Decree / Adoption Order:** legal proof of adoption. Usually a document with details of the court date of the adoption, the child, the adoptive parents, and so on. It is an official document with a stamp, seal or signature to make it legal.

## **D**

**Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability:** legal permission granted to applicants by the Adoption Authority of Ireland to adopt in Ireland (domestic adoption) or abroad (intercountry adoption). The Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability is a signed and sealed one-page document valid for two years with the possibility of a one-year extension. It also includes a recommendation of the child or children to be adopted. Also known as a **Section 40** from the **Adoption Act 2010**.

**Domestic Adoption:** where a child living in Ireland is adopted by someone also living in Ireland. There are four types of domestic adoption:

**1. Stepfamily:** This is where one partner in a relationship adopts their partner's child born in a previous relationship. Under current law, the partner who is the natural parent of the child must also adopt the child as part of this process.

**2. Extended Family or Relative Adoption:** This is where a child is adopted by a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (and their partner).

**3. Domestic Infant Adoption:** This is where a baby is given up for adoption by its birth parent(s) and is placed with a couple or individual who have already been assessed as being eligible and suitable to adopt a child. In most of these cases, the adopter(s) have never had a relationship with, or knowledge of, the birth parent(s) or the child. In other words, they don't know each other.

**4. Long-term Foster Care to Adoption:** This is where a child placed in foster care is afterwards adopted by their foster carer(s).

## E

**Extension:** a one-year extension of a Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability issued by the Adoption Authority of Ireland. Also known as a **Section 41** from the **Adoption Act 2010**

## F

**Family Adoption:** placement of a child by a birth mother with her own parents or extended family.

**Foreign Affairs, Authenticated or Apostilled:** an official stamp or certificate provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs to verify that a document is genuine. When an official document is leaving Ireland – for example, as part of an adoption pack for an intercountry adoption – the other country may ask for the documents in the pack to be authenticated or apostilled. The applicants contact the Department of Foreign Affairs and make an appointment to have this done.

**Fostering /Foster Care:** this is where Tusla – Child and Family Agency places a child with another family in situations where the child is assessed to be at risk. These arrangements can be short-term or long-term.

## G

**Garda Vetting (Police Vetting or Clearance):** a report issued by An Garda Síochána (or the police force of another country if an applicant has lived there) stating whether or not an applicant has ever been convicted of a crime. This report is required as part of the assessment process.

**GRO - General Register Office:** the country's central office for records relating to births, stillbirths, deaths, marriages, civil partnerships and adoptions in Ireland. Ireland's GRO is in Roscommon. The GRO maintains the Adopted Children's Register.

**Guardianship:** when a child is legally placed into the care of adult(s) who have rights and duties. Guardianship is **not** an adoption.

## H

**Habitually Resident:** a legal determination about the residency of applicant(s) referred to in Section 57 of the Adoption Act 2010.

**Hague Accredited Agency:** an agency given permission by that country's central authority to administer adoptions to Hague Convention standards (See next glossary entry). For example, in Ireland, the Helping Hands Adoption Mediation Agency (HHAMA) is a Hague accredited agency.

**Hague Convention:** an international agreement to safeguard Intercountry adoptions. The full title is the Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption.

This convention sets out international standards and practices for Intercountry adoption. It was finalised in The Hague, Netherlands in 1993 and ratified by Ireland in 2010. At present, 96 countries or states have accepted this convention and carry out adoptions under its guidelines.

**Hague Protocols or Articles:** written guidelines of the Hague Convention. For example Articles 15, 16, 17 & 23 form the basis for an intercountry adoption.

**Home Study Report or Home Assessment Report or Assessment Report:** the report carried out by the social workers of Tusla – Child & Family Agency or an accredited assessment agency about prospective adoptive parent's ability to care for the child. The report gathers information about

the potential parent's family, education, employment, relationship stability, views and attitudes, and so on. It also gathers information about how the potential parents deal with stress, what their reasons are for wanting to adopt, how they feel about other cultures and how they feel about having contact with birth relatives.

Most importantly, the report states the adopter's care plan and what arrangements they would make to prepare for parenting a child whose early life might have been traumatic, and who, as a result, might have extra needs. A home study report or assessment can take **1 – 2 years** or longer.

## I

**Immigration Clearance:** permission to legally bring a named child into Ireland from another country by way of intercountry adoption.

## L

**LAC or Local Adoption Committee:** committees established by Tusla – Child & Family Agency, under the Adoption Act 2010. The job of an LAC is to advise and assist the AAI and make recommendations to them. The committees meet in various locations based on local adoption offices.

## M

**Match:** in Information and Tracing, a match is when the wishes of two or more people on the contact register agree. For example, if an adopted person states they are willing to meet birth family members, and birth family members state they are willing to meet the adopted person, that is a match.

**Mediation:** a process of meetings and discussions with a third party – for example, a social worker – to help all birth relatives to agree how much information and contact is appropriate for everyone at this time in their lives.

**Medical History:** medical information about the birth family or the adopted person. The medical history will include information about hereditary conditions – that is, conditions or illnesses that run in families. Very often, the medical history is the main reason an adopted person makes contact with their birth family.

**Multi-disciplinary or Integrated team:** a group of professionals who work together throughout the adoption process. Team members include medical, administrative, legal and social work professionals who have knowledge and experience of the adoption process.

## N

**NACPR:** the National Application Contact Preference Register. This is a voluntary register for adopted people and their birth relatives held and managed by the Adoption Authority of Ireland since 2004.

**Natural Parent:** see **Birth Parent**.

**1952 Adoption Act:** the first legislation regarding adoption in the Republic of Ireland. No legal adoption took place before this Act.

**Non-identifying Information:** basic information about a person that does not reveal their identity. For example, adoptees can find out their birth parent's first name, their religion, their occupation, and so on. None of that kind of information tells them exactly who the person is or where they live.

**Notary and Notarise:** a notary is a person authorised to perform certain tasks such as witnessing signatures – for example, on legal forms, and so on.

## O

**Original Adoption Agency:** See **Adoption Society**.

**Original Birth Certificate:** - an adopted person's birth certificate **before** their adoption.

## P

**Pack:** the adoption application file or folder sent to another country as part of the intercountry adoption process. The application pack contains all the necessary documents, such as the Home Assessment Report, Declaration of Eligibility & Suitability, financial information, photos and other requested material. Sometimes, the application pack is known as 'an **Article 15**', as it relates to Article 15 of the Hague Convention.

**PAPs: Prospective adoptive parents or applicants.**



**PIP or Proposal in Principle:** non-identifying information about a child's particular or extra needs given to intercountry adopters whose home study report shows that they are capable of parenting the child and helping them to access relevant services. This information is given so that the adopters have full information when making their final decision to adopt the child. The PIP gives them a chance to discuss the child's needs with relevant professionals such as doctors, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, social workers and psychologists.

**Placement:** where a child is given into the care of an identified individual or couple for adoption. This placement is carried out under adoption regulations by Tusla – Child & Family Agency or another accredited body, and happens when a child is voluntarily given up by their birth mother.

**Police Vetting:** see **Garda Vetting**

**Post Placement Reports or PPRs:** reports written by social workers about the progress and development of the child placed for adoption. These reports give the adoption authorities abroad and in Ireland information about the progress of the child from the time they are placed with an Irish family for adoption. Sometimes, the reports are completed before the adoption is made final; other times, some countries require them after the adoption has been completed.

**Private Adoption:** where no agency was involved in the adoption. The child was placed directly with the adoptive parents by private individuals. In Ireland, private adoptions are illegal under the terms of the Adoption Act, 1998.

## R

**Ratify:** to confirm approval; to agree and accept. For example, Ireland 'ratified' the Hague Convention in 2010. In other words, Ireland approved the guidelines of the convention and agreed to abide by the guidelines in intercountry adoptions.

**Receiving Country:** the country the child is coming to.

**Referral:** information about a child proposed for adoption (with matched prospective adoptive parents) forwarded by a sending country or agency to a receiving country or agency. The referral information includes a social work report, medical information, legal information, court orders and photos.

**Registration - Illegal:** the incorrect registration of a birth under the Civil Registration Acts where the person registering as the parent is not the parent of the child.

**Resident in Ireland:** describes people living in this country and who intend to remain here in the long term. The Act uses the specific legal term '**Habitually Resident**' in judging this status.

**Reunion:** a meeting. In adoption terms, it often includes meeting birth relatives for the first time after first connecting through letters, photos and the exchange of non-identifying information.

**RICA – The Register of Intercountry Adoptions:** a listing of all intercountry adoptions that take place. The register is held and maintained by the Adoption Authority of Ireland. When intercountry adoptions are completed, adopters must apply for an entry into the RICA within 90 days of returning to Ireland. A certified copy of an entry, or a 'cert', is the equivalent of a birth certificate in Irish law. Another function of the RICA is the registration of adoptions outside of Ireland. This is often requested by the Irish Passport Office when considering applications for adopted persons.

## S

**Section 30** of the Adoption Act 2010: this section states that, in certain conditions, the Board of AAI or a High Court order can authorise an adoption without consulting with the birth father.

**Section 40** of the Adoption Act 2010: see **Declaration of Eligibility & Suitability**.

**Section 41** of the Adoption Act 2010: see **Extension**.

**Section 54** of the Adoption Act 2010: this section states that, in certain conditions, a High Court order can authorise an adoption to go ahead without the consent of the birth parents or guardians.

**Sending Country:** the country where the child is coming from. The Hague Convention calls this the **Country of Origin**.

**Sole Adopter:** a person who is assessed for adoption on their own.

**Spouse:** a person in a marriage or civil partnership; used as a general term for husband or wife.

**Statutory Basis:** the rules that are in place to make something legal. The law is usually put in place by a full Act of the Oireachtas or by a 'Statutory Instrument'. Statutory instruments are rules that can be signed into law by a minister without full government debate.

**Statutory Declaration** or a '**Stat Dec**': a written statement of fact signed in the presence of a solicitor, a notary or a peace commissioner.

**Step-parent Adoption:** where the child is adopted by a married couple, one of whom is the birth parent of the child. This is usually the birth mother.

**Supreme Court (Certified by):** a process whereby, if it is requested, documents which are already notarised are authenticated by the Supreme Court. Applicants can contact the Supreme Court Offices and make an appointment.

## T

**The – The Adoption Act 2010:** the most recent Irish law or legislation on adoption.

**Tracing:** a search carried out by an agency for or on behalf of an adopted person or birth family member. Also see **Active trace**.

**Trace:** a search for birth relatives using old records, social media, public records and registers to find where they now live, and to contact relatives by letter, email, phone or social media when up-to-date contact details are found.

**Tusla - Child & Family Agency:** the State agency which provides services, such as information and tracing services, to adopted people and birth relatives. They also assess applicants for intercountry and domestic adoption. Tusla was established by law in 2013 and took over many functions from the Health Services Executive (HSE). The agency is usually referred to by its abbreviated name – Tusla.

## Z

**Zappone:** Dr Katherine Zappone TD, **Minister for Children & Youth Affairs**, since May 2016.