



Thank you for your interest in Mercy Ministries of America's adoption program. We are licensed by the state of Tennessee as a Child-Placing Agency. We can place children for adoption in any state that complies with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Agreement, providing that the placement meets adoption requirements for both states. Applicants applying to adopt must meet qualifications of their state and the agency to become adoptive parents. This typically includes background and criminal checks, medical exams, letters of reference, financial information, and a thorough home study by a licensed Child-Placing agency or licensed clinical social worker in the state where the applicant resides. We want to assure each birth parent that the child will be placed in an approved, loving, Christian home.

Mercy Ministries of America is completely a faith ministry. We do not accept state or federal funds. Residents are invited to live in our homes free of charge. Mercy's staff works with every pregnant resident to help her reach the best decision for herself and her child. Each pregnant resident attends labor and delivery classes to assist her during her pregnancy. She will also participate in a decision-making class to inform her of what to expect if she were to parent or place her child for adoption. Mercy's staff is dedicated to helping each expectant birth mother make a decision that she can be at peace about for many years to come. If a resident does decide to place her infant for adoption, pre and post-adoption counseling is available. Adoption counseling is available to birth fathers as well, if they so desire.

Pregnant residents who choose to place their infant through our agency are given non-identifying summaries of waiting families and are allowed to select the family for their child. These include photos, letters, and basic information about each family. Her request for the type of family that she desires is matched with requests of the prospective adoptive family. Once an adoptive family is chosen, if desired, the expectant birth mother or birth parents can meet the family in person. This meeting can take place before or after the birth of the child.



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Mercy Ministries does not have a set policy on open or closed adoptions. We work with each individual case to support a degree of openness to which the birth parents and the adoptive parents agree.

One of the reasons that a birth mother may choose to place her child for adoption is to provide both a mother and a father for her child. Thus far, no birth mother has ever requested a single parent for her child while at Mercy Ministries. For this reason, we want to communicate to single applicants that your profile may not be chosen for consideration, but you are welcome to apply. It is our commitment to our birth mothers that the choice for adoptive parent(s) is completely up to them.

At this point, we are accepting most applications, including those for healthy Caucasian infants. We currently have very few minority families interested in adopting and encourage these to apply, along with families for consideration of children with medical special needs.

We believe that God places children into their families, and we do not wish to deny anyone the opportunity to receive the child God has meant for them. However, we do not want to offer false hope to people that everyone who applies to Mercy Ministries will receive a placement quickly. You may be selected very quickly after you apply, or you may wait a considerable length of time. It is impossible for us to tell you how long you will wait before being offered a placement. Generally speaking, the more specific families are about the type of child they wish to adopt, the longer they will wait for a placement. The more "open" a family is regarding background factors, racial issues, legal issues and post-placement contact, the more likely they are to be considered by the expectant birth parents for placement.

After the child is born, he or she is typically placed in an interim care home until the adoptive placement can be arranged. The birth mother signs documents in the hospital, which allows Mercy Ministries to discharge the child into our care. Our interim care homes are volunteers to Mercy Ministries who must meet similar qualifications as our adoptive families. The birth mothers must then sign a Surrender in the presence of a judge after the child is three days old. Mercy Ministries works with the birth mothers to complete the paperwork and set up a time to meet with the judge. Birth fathers may also complete a Surrender or they may sign a Waiver of Interest. The Waiver of Interest states that the birth father is aware he has been named as the father of the child, and he neither admits nor denies that he is the father, but has no desire to



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parent the child. This document must be signed in the presence of a Notary Public. Mercy Ministries will make every effort to contact the birth father.

Once the adoptive family is chosen and the Waiver and Surrender are completed, the child is placed with his or her adoptive family. Birth parents may or may not choose to be a part of the adoptive placement ceremony at Mercy Ministries. After the placement, Mercy Ministries will assist with any pre-arranged contact agreements between the birth parents and the adoptive family.

Please note that no agency fee is charged, but we must cover our costs for the application process. Adoptive parents are also asked to reimburse Mercy Ministries of America for all medical charges (i.e. prenatal, prescriptions, and labor and delivery) related to the birth mother and child not covered by the birth mother's insurance, legal fees if necessary, and interim care costs. Beyond that, any other monies that a couple may choose to give the agency are considered strictly a donation and are tax-deductible.

We ask the applicant to complete and return all of the forms, along with a copy of an approved home study from a licensed Child-Placing Agency in their state. If the applicant does not have a home study completed, they should contact their local department of social services for a list of licensed agencies and licensed clinical social workers. The local agency or social worker will assist the applicant with completing a home study, provide post-placement supervision, and send us reports until the finalization of the adoption. Once the completed application is received and reviewed, we will send a letter to the applicant to inform them if they have been approved and are being considered for placement. Please be aware that there is a one-year deadline from the time the application is sent from our office for the applicant to return the completed application packet. If the deadline is missed, the paperwork must be updated and a \$25.00 late fee will be due.

We ask each person to give prayerful consideration to the decision to apply. If you feel strongly led by God to apply for your child through Mercy Ministries of America, we will be happy to assist you in the application process and work with you toward a possible placement. We also encourage you to contact other agencies as we wish the best for you in your adoption endeavors.



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While you are waiting for a placement, we would like for you to call occasionally to let us know how you are doing. We know that the wait can be difficult and frustrating at times.

We hope that this gives you an idea of our adoption program so that you can make an informed decision. If you decide to apply to adopt an infant through this ministry, you may begin the process online. Please read the fee agreement, and if you agree to the terms and conditions, then you may pay your initial \$25.00 application fee with a credit card. If you prefer to pay by check, please send the check with a written request for the application to Mercy Ministries of America, P.O. Box 111060, Nashville, TN 37222-1060. The \$25.00 is a non-refundable deposit. We ask that you send the remaining \$200.00 (which is also non-refundable) when you send in your complete application. If you have any questions, please call the adoptions department at (615) 831-6987.

If you are an expectant mother who is interested in our residential program or know someone who may be interested, we invite you to contact us at the same number and/ or address above. You may also contact us via email at adoptions@mercyministries.com. We understand that this time can be very difficult if you are facing an unplanned, crisis pregnancy, so please feel free to contact us any time day or night. May God bless you as you seek to make the very best decision for you and your child's life.

We hope you will remember Mercy Ministries of America, our birth mothers, and our babies in your prayers. We look forward to hearing from you.



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