

Preparing for Parenthood

Congratulations! You have finished the home study process and soon will be ready to join the pool of waiting families! Now is the time to shift your focus from **PAPERWORK** to **PARENTING**. Consider yourself a Hopeful Adoptive Parent and begin to prepare for the arrival of your child. Here are some suggestions to help you while you wait for the newest member of your family.

Networking

Share the news you are planning to adopt as much as possible...and then continue to remind others now and again. You never know where your match will come from.

Post your profile on The Cradle's website. Review the instructions on how to set up your online profile at: <https://www.cradle.org/profile-information>. When ready, submit your online profile materials to profiles@cradle.org. Your online profile will be added to the portfolio of families within 10 business days of submission.

Ask your counselor for instructions on how to join the private Facebook group for those families waiting in our General Domestic Pool.

After some time has passed, (we usually recommend it a year) consider updating your web and/or long profile to give it a fresh look. Consider consulting a profile professional. Contact your Adoption Counselor for more information.

Take Good care and connect

Take time to do things that will not be as easy once your child comes home. Plan a vacation, have a spa day or spend time wandering around a museum! Prepare a list of fun things to do on days you feel down.

Attend Cradle Waiting Families Support Group meetings offered throughout the year. This is a great way to connect with other Hopeful Adoptive Parents.

Join CAFFA (Chicago Area Families For Adoption) www.caffa.org .

Attend a Cradle event such as the Open House, Holiday Party, or Summer Picnic. More information is available on The Cradle's website.

Connect with other families. Whether you connect with those you met in classes, through a social media group or through a suggestion from your counselor, meeting families who are sharing the same experience can be very helpful. Ask your counselor for a mentor family who has been down this road and can help you along, even if just by listening.

Join an online support group: <http://www.adoptivefamiliescircle.com/groups/>

Keep in touch with your Adoption Counselor. Let her know if you are heading out of town, especially if you may not have phone or email access.

If you find yourself struggling with the wait, seek outside counseling with a therapist who specializes in adoption. This will help you move forward in your adoption process in a

healthy and positive way, which will ultimately benefit your child. Your Cradle counselor is happy to help you identify someone.

Getting ready for baby

Read, read, and read on all the topics that you will not have the time or energy to focus on once your child comes home. To be informed on topics like development, sleep and discipline will certainly come in handy. Ask your counselor for some suggestions on adoption-specific reading or go to <http://www.cradle.org/lifelong-support/resources>

Subscribe to *Adoptive Families Magazine* at <https://www.adoptivefamilies.com/join/>

Familiarize yourself with The Fussy Baby Network at <http://www.erikson.edu/fussybaby/> and infant nurse agencies like <http://www.sweetdreamsinfantcare.com/> and <http://www.blissnewborncare.com/>.

Interview and select your pediatrician. You will want someone who can be available and respond to you fairly quickly when you are presented with a Request for Family Profile (RFP) and you will also want to identify your child's future doctor.

Sign up for infant child care or parenting classes. There are numerous options available on a variety of topics--anything from basic care to different ways to wear your baby carrier--explore topics that interest you. The more you learn now the more confident you will feel when your baby comes home.

Take online classes offered by Adoption Learning Partners. You might want to re-visit some of the classes you took for your home study preparation and sign up for new classes. www.adoptionlearningpartners.org

Prepare your home for baby's arrival to your comfort level. If you feel comfortable, set up your nursery or maybe just paint the walls. If you would rather wait, perhaps purchase key items you will need when your baby first comes home (car seat, bottles, bassinet) and stash them away for when the time comes.

Create a baby registry. You have the option to keep your registry private for the time being, but this may help you feel organized about what you need and like when your little one arrives.

If you are approved to adopt transracially, continue to research transracial adoption and cultural resources in your community.

Once you have decided what classes you would like to take and what tasks you would like to accomplish; spread them out. Maybe pick an item to do a month.

Stay connected to the adoption process!

The wait can be hard at times. We find those who stay connected are able to stay more positive during the wait. Take the suggestions above, keep an open dialogue with your Adoption Counselor and take good care of yourself!