

# A Checklist for Private Adoptions

The following is a guide and checklist for handling adoptions through a private adoption agency or private attorney.

1. Draft the Petition for Termination and Adoption. Combine the two actions in one petition, especially when the adoption involves a step-child or the adoption of a relative's child. Within the petition, request the appointment of an Amicus Attorney and a Social Study, and state the grounds for termination. Attach to the petition the following affidavits:
  - a. Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children
  - b. Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction Act (UCCJA)
  - c. Affidavit of Status, if biological parents were never married, common law or otherwise
  - d. Relinquishment of Parental Rights
2. Request service only if the biological parent(s) refuse to sign the Relinquishment of Parental Rights or their whereabouts are unknown.
3. File a motion and order for the appointment of an Amicus Attorney for the child to be adopted.
4. File a motion and order for the appointment of an Attorney Ad Litem for Respondent cited by Publication, once time for answer has passed after publication.
5. Obtain fingerprints from the Houston Police Department, Texas Department of Public Safety or Harris County Constable's Office. Obtain two fingerprint cards, send the cards and fee of \$15 per person to: Texas Department of Public Safety, Crime Records Service, Attention: Correspondence Supervisor, P.O. Box 4143, Austin, TX 78765-4143. Include all personal information, full name, sex, race, social security number, driver's license number, and date of birth. Give all pertinent information about the case, such as cause number, court number, and court address.
6. Obtain a Social Study from the Harris County Domestic Relations Office. You must pay a fee of \$125.00 before the investigator is assigned to begin the study. This will take approximately six to eight weeks.
7. Prepare the Decree to Terminate and Grant Adoption and the Statement of Evidence. The first part of the Decree is the termination, either by relinquishment or by other grounds; the second part is the adoption.
8. Order a certified copy of the Decree once the hearing has been held, preferably the same day. Remember that these proceedings are confidential and are sealed from public viewing.

*The Houston Bar Association would like to thank*

*The Honorable David Fraga and Helen Quintero for providing this guide for private adoptions.*