

VOLUNTARY POST-ADOPTION CONTACT AGREEMENTS: An Explanation for Youth



Is contact with my birth family after adoption possible?

Yes, contact with birth relatives after adoption IS possible. If you're considering being adopted or have siblings who are being adopted, you need to know about voluntary Post-Adoption Contact Agreements (PACAs).

PACA BENEFITS

- You maintain an emotional connection to your birth relatives
- You have better access to your birth family history and information
- Your birth relatives and adoptive parents work together to support you

A voluntary **Post-Adoption Contact Agreement** is a legally enforceable agreement made between the adoptive parent and birth relative(s). Any youth 12 or older must also consent to the PACA. This agreement allows you to have communication or contact with your birth relative(s) after you have been adopted. Your adoption cannot be stopped or refused based on your consent or not to a PACA. A PACA is approved by the court that finalizes the adoption.

TERMS TO KNOW

Adoptive Family – The family selected to adopt.

Youth – Any person who is 12 years of age or older must consent to a PACA.

Birth Relative – A parent, grandparent, step-parent, sibling, aunt or uncle of the child's birth family, whether related by blood, marriage or adoption.

Parties – Birth relatives and adoptive parents.

Participants – Everyone who is consulted on the development of the agreement. This may include you, your caseworker and/or your guardian ad litem.

TYPES OF CONTACT

Different types of contact can be included in the agreement that you, your birth relatives and your adoptive parents develop. Contact can include any of the following:

- Visitation (supervised or unsupervised)
- Phone calls
- FaceTime or Skype
- Letters/Email
- Cards/Gifts
- Pictures
- Other contact mutually agreed upon

PLANNING VISITATION

The location of visits can be anywhere the parties agree, such as in a home, a restaurant, a community outing (such as a park or the zoo), or a county children and youth agency. Most importantly, it should be a place where everyone feels safe. These locations will be determined by your birth relative(s) and your adoptive parents when the agreement is created.

The parties to the PACA will determine the specific type, duration, and frequency of the contact. Contact can occur as little or as often as the parties decide. Conditions, such as sobriety, can be included if the parties agree.



What if I don't want a PACA?

That's fine. A PACA is voluntary and must be consented to by you. Separate agreements may be developed for different relatives. For example, a PACA may include different contact between you and your sibling than with your birth parent.



Could a PACA affect my adoption?

No, agreeing to or refusing a PACA will not affect your adoption.



What if my adoptive family doesn't want to be a part of the PACA?

All parties must be in agreement to participate in a PACA. If your adoptive family does not want a PACA, then the court will not issue one.

More Information

For more information about a PACA, you can speak with:

- your caseworker
- your guardian ad litem
- the child welfare court
- your attorney
(in cases of private adoption)