

# Adoption: the child comes first



In Québec, the child is at the **heart** of the adoption process

This means that adoption plans must put the needs, interests and rights of the child first. All decisions regarding adoptions must take these three fundamental values into account.

Adoption is now considered a child protection measure. Its first purpose is to ensure that adopted children receive the care and love they need to develop within their new family environment. Adoption also responds to the legitimate desire of responsible adults to found a family or enlarge an existing one.

Like other social phenomena, adoption has undergone tremendous changes in recent years and is constantly evolving. Today, those wishing to adopt a child face new rules, whether they want to adopt a child domiciled in Québec or abroad.

There is a long waiting period to adopt Québec children under two years of age because there are far fewer children in this age group than there are parents interested in adopting a child. The waiting period is, however, much shorter for preschool and school-age children as well as for those with special needs.

The same applies to international adoptions, although waiting periods and adoption procedures vary from country to country. Québec adheres to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption and has incorporated the rules and practices set out in the Convention into its adoption procedures.

Québec children who have been orphaned or abandoned, or whose parents have voluntarily relinquished their parental rights, can count on the services provided by youth centres to find a pre-qualified adoptive family or gain access to the *Banque mixte Program*. The goal of this program is to allow children who are at risk of abandonment or whose parents are unable to meet their needs to be placed as quickly as possible in a stable foster family while awaiting adoption.

The adoption process comprises three phases: preparation of the adoption plan, implementation of the plan and possible use of post-adoption services. Throughout the entire adoption process, the child's adaptation to his or her new family environment is the common thread guiding the decisions taken by the individuals and organizations involved.

The first phase—i.e., **preparation of the adoption plan**—is divided into two parts: one involving the child and the other, the adoptive parents. If the assessment of a child and his or her biological parents lead to the conclusion that adoption is the best option for the child's protection, the *Directeur de la*

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*protection de la jeunesse* (DPJ) will prepare an adoption plan. A child will be considered adoptable if the biological parents consent to the adoption or if the court, at the request of the DPJ, declares the child eligible for adoption. The adoptive parents will be assessed by the DPJ to determine their ability to care for the child and provide a welcoming environment that meets the child's needs.

### STEPS FOR ADOPTING A CHILD DOMICILED IN QUÉBEC

Registration with the  
Directeur de la protection de la jeunesse (DPJ)

Psychosocial assessment  
of the persons wishing to adopt a child

Matching a child with future adoptive parents  
who can provide for his or her needs

Placement of the child with the adoptive  
parents following a court ruling

Adoption judgment

During the second phase—i.e., **the implementation of the adoption plan**—the DPJ matches the adoptable child with the selected adoptive family. It asks the court to order the placement of the child with a view to adoption. It provides assistance, guidance and advice to the child and the adoptive family, generally for six months. The court will issue an adoption judgment if the child integrates successfully. The adoption judgment definitively transfers parental authority to the adoptive parents and confers on the adopted child and the adoptive parents the same rights and obligations as biological filiation.

The third phase of the project—i.e., **post-adoption services**—begins with the adoption judgment and involves the services available to the child, the adoptive parents and, where warranted, the biological parents. Post-adoption services essentially consist of guidance and monitoring activities.

Those who would like to adopt a child born in Québec must contact the DPJ branch associated with the youth centre in their region. A list of DPJs can be found at the end of this publication.



For more information on adopting a child domiciled outside Québec and on certified Québec intercountry adoption bodies, please contact:

Secrétariat à l'adoption internationale  
201, boul. Crémazie Est, Montréal (Québec) H2M 1L2

Phone: (514) 873-5226  
Fax: (514) 873-1709  
Email: adoption.quebec@msss.gouv.qc.ca  
Website: www.adoption.gouv.qc.ca

For more information on adopting a child domiciled in Québec, please contact the Directeur de la protection de la jeunesse (DPJ) at the youth centre of your region:

<b>Centre jeunesse du Bas-Saint-Laurent</b> Phone: (418) 723-1255	<b>Centre jeunesse Gaspésie-Les Îles</b> Phone: (418) 368-1803
<b>Centre jeunesse du Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean</b> Phone: (418) 549-4853	<b>Centres jeunesse Chaudière-Appalaches</b> Phone: (418) 837-9331
<b>Centre jeunesse de Québec</b> Phone: (418) 661-6951	<b>Centre jeunesse de Laval</b> Phone: (450) 975-4150
<b>Centre jeunesse de la Mauricie et du Centre-du-Québec</b> Phone: (819) 378-5481	<b>Centres jeunesse de Lanaudière</b> Phone: (450) 756-4555
<b>Centre jeunesse de l'Estrie</b> Phone: (819) 822-2727	<b>Centre jeunesse des Laurentides</b> Phone: (450) 436-7607
<b>Centre jeunesse de Montréal</b> Phone: (514) 896-3100	<b>Centre jeunesse de la Montérégie</b> Phone: (450) 928-5125
<b>Centres de la jeunesse et de la famille Batshaw (Montréal)</b> Phone: (514) 989-1885	<b>Centre de santé Tulattavik Health Centre (Ungava Bay)</b> Phone: (819) 964-2905
<b>Centres jeunesse de l'Outaouais</b> Phone: (819) 771-6631	<b>Inuitsivik Health Centre (Hudson Bay)</b> Phone: (819) 988-2355
<b>Centre jeunesse de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue</b> Phone: (819) 732-3244	<b>Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay</b> Phone: (819) 855-2844
<b>Centre jeunesse Côte-Nord</b> Phone: (418) 589-9927	



Different rules apply for the adoption of a child domiciled outside Québec than for a Québec child. For more information, those interested in adopting a child domiciled outside Québec should contact the *Secrétariat à l'adoption internationale* or a Québec body certified by the *Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux*. Only these agencies are authorized to undertake international adoption procedures on behalf of adoptive parents.

In certain cases, based on very strict conditions and criteria, adoptive parents may be authorized by the *Secrétariat à l'adoption internationale* to adopt a child without going through a certified body. However, all adoption plans must be supervised by the *Secrétariat à l'adoption internationale*, which issues the required authorizations.

For all adoption plans involving a child domiciled outside Québec, the first step is to open a file at the *Secrétariat à l'adoption internationale*, which gives its written authorization allowing the adoptive parents to undertake the next step, i.e., a psychosocial assessment. The purpose of this assessment is to determine whether the adoptive parents are qualified to adopt a child and, where warranted, to make a recommendation regarding the adoption plan. The qualities and aptitudes required by the adoptive parents



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may vary considerably depending on the age of the child, especially if the child has special needs or if the plan involves the adoption of more than one child.

The assessment is generally carried out by the DPJ, or a member of the *Ordre des psychologues du Québec* or the *Ordre professionnel des travailleurs sociaux du Québec* designated by the DPJ. If the adoptive parents have decided to adopt a child domiciled in a country that has not ratified the Hague Convention and this country has issued an adoption judgment without requiring the intervention of the DPJ, the adoptive parents may themselves select a member of one of the two professional orders to obtain a psychosocial assessment.

The psychosocial assessment report declaring individuals to be qualified to adopt a child domiciled outside Québec is an essential document. It is enclosed with the file prepared by the adoptive parents, in accordance with the requirements of the selected country. When the file is complete, it is forwarded to the child's country of origin.

After a waiting period that varies depending on the country of origin of the child recommended in the psychosocial assessment report, the adoptive parents will receive a notice proposing a child for adoption. If the adoptive parents accept the proposed

child, they will undertake the necessary legal and administrative steps to obtain a decision granting an adoption from the child's country of origin and to have it recognized by Québec.

The steps that must be taken in Québec vary according to the country of origin of the child. If the country has ratified the Hague Convention, the decision by the country may be administratively recognized by the *Secrétariat à l'adoption internationale*. If the child's country of origin has not ratified the Hague Convention, the decision must be legally recognized by the Québec Youth Court. In addition, certain countries do not issue adoption judgments. In such cases, the DPJ guides adoptive parents through the specific procedures needed to obtain an adoption judgment in Québec.

Adopted children have the same rights as children born in Québec with respect to their filiation (legal ties) with their adoptive parent(s). However, the children arrive in Québec with the status of permanent residents and their adoptive parents must apply, on the child's behalf, for Canadian citizenship.



### PROCEDURE FOR ADOPTING A CHILD DOMICILED OUTSIDE QUÉBEC

Obtain general information on adoption from the Secrétariat à l'adoption internationale or one of the certified intercountry adoption bodies

Sign a contract with a certified body

Open a file with the Secrétariat à l'adoption internationale

Undergo psychosocial assessment, prepare and forward file to the child's country of origin

Child proposed for adoption by the selected country

Administrative or legal steps in the child's country of origin and in Québec to obtain a definitive adoption decision