**COURAGE POSTER SCRIPT**

**PROCESS OF ADOPTION**

INTRODUCTION

The best long-term solution for a child, outside of their own family, is to be placed in a loving, permanent home through the process of adoption.

Courage has outlined the process of adoption in this poster, or you can download the relevant video or presentation from our website.

The process may vary slightly from country to country, but this is believed to represent a good standard approach.

A child is adopted if they have been placed in the permanent care of a person in terms of a court order.

The purposes of adoption are to:

* Protect and nurture children by providing a safe, healthy environment with positive support.
* To promote the goals of permanency planning by connecting children to other safe and nurturing family relationships intended to last a lifetime.

A child is adoptable if:

* The child is an orphan and has no guardian or caregiver who is willing to adopt the child.
* The whereabouts of the child’s parent or guardian cannot be established.
* The child has been abandoned.
* The child’s parent or guardian has abused or deliberately neglected the child, or has allowed the child to be abused or deliberately neglected.
* The child is in need of a permanent alternative placement

A person may adopt a child:

* Jointly by:
	+ A husband and wife.
	+ Partners in a permanent domestic life-partnership.
	+ Other persons sharing a common household and forming a permanent family unit.
* By a widower, widow, divorced or unmarried person.
* By a married person whose spouse is the parent of the child.
* By the biological father of a child born out of wedlock.
* By the foster parent of the child.
1. ADOPTION SOCIAL WORKER ENGAGED

In the process of adoption there are three important groups of people. The adoptive parents who are wanting to adopt a child, the birth parents who are unable to take care of their child and the child themselves.

A child can be adopted by a couple or by a person on their own as long as they are deemed to be fit and proper parents, will respect the rights of the child, and will take care of the child in totality, from a physical, financial, intellectual emotional, social and moral perspective, until they turn 18 years of age.

A child is considered available for adoption if their biological parent or parents sign consent for them to be adopted, if they are orphaned and have no guardian or caregiver willing to take care of them, if the whereabouts of their parent or guardian cannot be established, if they have been abandoned, if they have been deliberately abused, neglected or exploited, or if they are in need of a permanent alternative placement.

The assessment for both the child and parents must be conducted by an accredited adoption social worker and in line with your country's legal system and Children’s Act.

2 a. to 2.b REQUEST TO ADOPT AND SCREENING (PREPARE AND EDUCATE

The adoptive parent or family need to contact an accredited adoption social worker and complete a formal request to adopt.  They will then be subjected to a number of assessments to ensure that they fit the requirements of an adoptive parent, this includes medical, psychological, relationship, financial and home assessments, as well as a police clearance.

During this 'screening' , the parents will also be counselled about the process of adoption to ensure that they are prepared for this life changing decision.

2 c. to 2 d. HOME VISIT AND APPLICATION TO ADOPT

Once they and their home environment have been assessed and deemed fit and proper, the adoptive parents will make a formal application to adopt and be placed on your country's registry of adoptable children and parents.

3 a. CRISIS OR UNPLANNED PREGNANCY/ CHILD ABANDONMENT

For the child, they will need to be assessed for adaptability by an accredited adoption social worker, or legally pronounced abandoned.

3 b. MOTHER GIVES BIRTH

If the adoption relates to a mother experiencing a crisis pregnancy, who wishes to place her child up for adoption, the mother should be counselled extensively to

ensure that she understands the permanency of the arrangement and what consent will mean.

3 c. to 3 d. ADOPTION CONSENT OR CONFIRMATION OF ABANDONMENT AND COUNSELLING

The birth mother (and preferably the father as well) will then have to formally rescind their parental rights in a court and consent to the adoption of their child, counselling should continue throughout this process.

4. ADOPTABLE CHILDREN AND PARENTS REGISTER

Once the child is deemed adoptable, they are also placed on your country's register of adoptable children and parents.   There is often a 30 to 60 day waiting period after a parent has signed away their rights to their child, to ensure that they are 100% sure that they want to do this.

5 a. to 5 b. MATCH CHILD WITH PARENTS, NATIONAL OR INTER-COUNRTY ADOPTION (IF NO VIABLE MATCH NATIONALLY)

The adoptable child is then matched with the ideal parents for them either in their own country, or if no suitable match if found nationally, the social worker may consider international adoption.

All international adoptions are overseen by inter-country agreements as set out by the Hague Convention on International Adoption.

6. to 7. STATE AUTHORISATION OF ADOPTION AND PLACE CHLD WITH ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Once the child has been appropriately matched with parents, the state or governing body needs to authorise the adoption, and the child is then placed in the care of their adoptive parents.

8. TO 9. POST PLACEMENT ASSESSMENT AND FINALISATION OF ADOPTION

There is usually a post placement assessment before the adoption is finalised in court.

10. REGISTRATION OF ADOPTION/RE-REGISTRATIN OF BABY/CHILD

The adoption should then be registered by the relevant authority and the child's identity documentation amended to reflect their new adoptive family status.

11. INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIVE FAMILY FLY HOME

If the child was adopted by international parents, it is only at this point that they can return to their home country.

12. POST ADOPTION SUPPORT

Adoption is a wonderful way of creating new permanent families, but it is not all smooth sailing, so it is recommended that adoptive parents seek post adoption support through social workers, counsellors and other adoptive parents or families.

An adoption may only be rescinded  (or cancelled) if it is in the best interests of the child, the biological mother's consent was required but not obtained for the adoption, or the adoptive parent did not qualify to adopt the child in terms of the act that governs the adoption process.

This may only be applied for in a High Court and must be lodged within a reasonable time e.g. in South Africa, this time cannot exceed two years from the date of the adoption.

For more detailed information, please refer to your country's specific Children’s Act that guides your adoption process.

ENDS.