

**LEGAL ASSISTANCE OFFICE  
NAVAL LEGAL SERVICE OFFICE NORTHWEST**

**ADOPTION INFORMATION AND PROCEDURES**

Adoption is the procedure by which a child born to one set of parents becomes the legal child of another parent or couple, who then assume all the parental rights and duties concerning the child.

NAVAL LEGAL SERVICE OFFICE NW **only** prepares adoption pleadings for consensual stepparent adoptions. This means that the relinquishing natural parent **must** agree to the adoption by the stepparent.

NLSO NW prepares these court pleadings for filing in Kitsap, Snohomish and Island Counties. Procedures vary from county to county so all filing details are not listed here. Your attorney will provide specific information for your case.

NLSO NW cannot assist in preparation of adoption paperwork affecting a Native American child.

The prospective adopting stepparent must have an initial consultation with an attorney. During the consultation, the attorney will discuss the legal ramifications of an adoption and other potential concerns.

After the initial consultation, if the stepparent wishes to adopt their stepchild, he or she will be given an adoption worksheet to complete. Part One of the adoption worksheet requests information about the stepparent, natural parent, relinquishing parent, and adoptive child. Part Two of the adoption worksheet deals with information regarding the preparer of the "Post-Placement Report". The requirements of the preparer vary from county to county but he or she must be approved by the court and generally must be a professional such as a social worker.

Once the stepparent has completed the adoption worksheet it should be returned to NLSO NW along with a copy of the child's birth certificate. After these are received an attorney or paralegal will prepare the Consent to Adoption which the client will send to the relinquishing parent for signature. A disinterested party to the adoption must witness the signing of the consent paperwork.

Once the Consent to Adoption form is received from the relinquishing parent, the client will bring the form back to NLSO NW. The attorney or paralegal will then prepare the additional court pleadings. When the remaining court paperwork is ready the client may come in to review and discuss with the attorney or paralegal. Generally, if we have not yet met with the natural parent, he or she should come to this meeting. If both sign an agreement regarding joint legal representation the paperwork can be discussed with both.

Once documents have been reviewed and signed by the stepparent and natural parent, the stepparent (who is the "Petitioner" in the matter) will then take the documents to the county courthouse. The filing fee is \$200.00, cash or money order, no personal checks are accepted. The Petitioner/stepparent will present a request to the court to formally appoint the person to prepare the Post-placement Report. The hearing can then be scheduled. Procedures at each county court vary for the timing. After the adoption is completed there will be some other small fees for registering the adoption.

- General NLSO NW Adoption handout (revised 8/18/2008)