

# How to Help Every Member of Your Family as You Grow Through Adoption

## A Resource Guide for Families with Biological & Blended Households

Whether you are a parent with biological children at home, a blended family, or a household already shaped by love in many forms, adding a child through adoption is one of the most meaningful journeys your family can take. It is also one that calls for honest conversations, thoughtful preparation, and ongoing support. This resource is designed to help every member of your family feel informed, included, and ready for this shift in the family dynamic.

*Every child deserves a permanent, loving family – and every family deserves the support to make that permanency thrive.*

### Alabama Pre/Post Adoption Connections (APAC) is Here to Support Every Member of Your Family

Adoption affects everyone in your household. Before the process begins, it is important to involve your biological and step-children in age-appropriate conversations. Children and teens who feel informed and included are better prepared for the changes ahead. APAC hosts an on-demand training site, and all trainings are free for parents to access from any location. The following two webinars are particularly valuable for families like yours.



#### **Preparing Your Child for a New Foster or Adopted Sibling** (Runtime: 82 Minutes)

Foster and adoptive parents are often excited about the placement of a new child, but many are not given the tools needed to prepare the children already in the home. When waiting children are not prepared for the challenges that can occur when bringing in a new sibling they can be left feeling confused, fearful, and angry, causing the placement to be at risk. The newly placed child can also find themselves experiencing similar emotions as they try to fit into a previous family structure.

This webinar focuses on: the impact of a child's trauma on the entire family, how to help children understand terms like visitation, reunification and permanency, developing open communication, and safety planning. In addition, the specific needs of both waiting children and newly placed children are discussed.



#### **Parenting Together in Blended Family Situations** (Runtime: 58 Minutes)

Blended families pose unique challenges that don't normally arise in more traditional households. When children from different backgrounds and various situations come together into a new home, there is bound to be potential for intensified struggles for all parties involved. This can be even trickier for all of the co-parenting adults involved. Some of these issues include scheduling, relating well to other members of the family, respect toward adults, rivalries/jealousy toward siblings, as well as ownership vs. sharing of items in the home.

This webinar explores the unique challenges often faced by blended family/co-parenting situations and offers practical, approaches to address these difficulties from a place of patience and compassion.

# A Few Suggestions

## Talk Early and Often

Begin conversations with your children well before the adoption journey is started. Use simple, honest language appropriate to each child's age. Let them ask questions, and welcome those questions at any time.

## Acknowledge Every Feeling

Excitement, worry, jealousy, and pride can all live in the same child at the same time. Validate all of it. Children who feel heard are more resilient when transitions become difficult.

## Include Children in the Process

When appropriate, allow your children to participate in preparations: setting up a room, choosing a family activity, or writing a welcome note. This builds investment and excitement rather than anxiety.

## Be Honest About What You Don't Know

You won't have all the answers, and that is okay. Saying "I don't know, but we will figure it out together" models the resilience and openness your family will need throughout this journey.

## Understanding Trauma in the Context of Adoption

All children who are adopted have experienced some form of trauma. Separation from a birth family — regardless of the circumstances — is inherently a significant loss. The nature and expression of that trauma will vary from child to child, but it is important that every adoptive family enter the process informed and prepared.

APAC's adoption-competent counselors are available at no cost to families who have adopted children from Alabama's foster care. They are available to work with every member of your family — not only in times of crisis, but throughout the everyday joys and challenges of family life. APAC counselors have offices in Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile, and Montgomery. Telehealth options are also available to meet your family's needs wherever you are.