



## Frequently Asked Questions (Adoption)

### Why should I choose your law firm to handle my adoption?

Stephenson and Fleming, LLP, is comprised of staff who have unique professional backgrounds associated with child and family law, adoption services, and governmental agencies. We understand not only the legal adoption process from start to finish, but also how to navigate a complex system of governmental agencies involved in evaluating your adoption, finalizing your adoption, and amending your child's birth certificate. Our staff have worked as both attorneys and social workers specializing in adoption for County Departments of Social Services, the NC Division of Social Services, and the Administrative Office of the Courts. We understand the unique needs of adoptive families, especially foster parents and relatives who are adopting through the NC child welfare system.

We provide efficient and timely legal adoption services at a fair and reasonable price.

We are a family friendly firm, dedicated to partnering with all types of families and can meet your unique legal needs based on your family's composition. We specialize in working with LGBTQ families, single parents, relatives and grandparents, and blended families.

### How long will my adoption take?

The timeframe for an adoption will vary based on the type of adoption and the complexity of the case. Stephenson & Fleming specializes in providing legal adoption services in a family friendly, diversity-oriented environment at a reasonable price and in as efficient and timely a manner as possible. All legal documents will be prepared by the agency within 3 weeks of the review of all necessary information and documentation. Once signed and notarized, all legal documents will be filed with the appropriate Clerk of Superior Court's office within 72 business hours of receipt at the firm.

Following the filing of an adoption petition, dependent upon the type of adoption, there may be a requirement for two visits from a private agency or county Department of Social Services to confirm that the adoption is in the best interest of the child. We do not have control over how long the work of the agency or the Clerk of Court takes. However, we will work with these external parties to mitigate any barriers to timely completion whenever possible.

How many times will I meet with you?

All clients will meet with a representative from Stephenson & Fleming a minimum of twice during the adoption process either in person or through Skype. The first face to face contact will be an information gathering session; the second to review and sign all paperwork. Additional face to face meetings may occur based on the complexity of the case.

How much will the adoption cost?

Our firm's fees are designed to be reasonable and affordable. Please contact us for more information.

Will I receive a quote for the legal fees before work begins?

Yes, all legal fees will be quoted, and the quote will be signed by all parties before any work begins. Payment of legal fees do not guarantee the finalization of an adoption. In North Carolina, the Clerk of Superior Court must make a final determination regarding the best interest of the child involved.

Are there additional services your firm provides associated with the logistics of my adoptions?

Yes, due to our staff's extensive experience with the County and State Child Welfare System, NC Vital Records, and the Administrative Office of the Courts, we have unique insight into the complexities of not only the legal adoption process, but how to navigate the adjacent and related governmental systems associated with an adoption. The following services are provided as needed:

- Detailed direction regarding interaction with either a private agency or County Department of Social Services regarding completion of the Report to the Court on the Proposed Adoption
- Detailed direction regarding gaining an amended birth certificate and social security card
- Assistance with facilitation of receipt of amended birth certificate and social security card
- Interaction with Clerk of Superior Court, NC Division of Social Services, Vital Records Offices, local county Department of Social Services, and private child placing agencies as needed