

A photograph of a baby lying on a yellow, shaggy rug on a wooden floor. The baby is wearing a white t-shirt with a colorful logo consisting of several stylized human figures in green, orange, and yellow, and the word "Pact" printed in red below it. A grey stuffed animal is visible in the upper right corner.

# Considering Adoption with Pact

*Becoming an Adoptive Parent*

# Adoption is a lifelong Pact

Pact is a non-profit full-service adoption agency, licensed in the state of California, that serves children of color and their families. Pact focuses on families who specifically want to adopt children of color, the overwhelming majority of whom are themselves people of color, and who are committed to open adoption. Pact has established a national reputation advocating for ethical, honest, anti-racist adoption practices.

In order to best serve children's needs, we provide not only adoption placement services as a licensed adoption agency, but also lifelong education, support and community for adoptees and their families on issues of adoption and race.

We work with first/birth parents, adoptees, adoptive parents, adoption professionals, and other individuals connected to the adoption triad and constellation.

## What does Pact stand for?

Pact means “a solemn agreement; to be of one mind; a covenant.” Our goal is for each adopted child to come to understand the pact made by their adoptive parent(s) and first/birth parents out of love for their child.



## Pact's Placement Program

At Pact, we know that considering adoption takes a great deal of courage, love and reflection. The adoption process has many layers and steps that can feel overwhelming to navigate. We know there is much more to adoption than bringing home a baby—in fact placement is only the beginning of the lifelong journey you are considering. Each decision you make now becomes part of your child's story.

Pregnant parents (and their partners), expecting a child of color and considering adoption, often come to Pact because their preference is to place their child with a family who shares their child's racial identity. Pact actively recruits families of color to meet the needs of expectant parents seeking families of color. The majority of Pact placements involve children placed with families where one or more parent is the same race as the child.

Adoption is a way to bring a child into your life and it is also a complex experience for children that we can help you understand and navigate.

California residency is not required to work with Pact for placement and case management services, however home study and post-placement services are only available to those who reside in the California counties we serve.



## Taking the Next Steps

You

...may be single, married or divorced.

...may have other children.

...may be a working parent.

...don't need to own your own home.

...may have a modest income.

...may be LGBTQ+ identified.

Most essential is your commitment to the life-long journey of adoption and supporting your child.



# The Adoption Process with Pact

## **Pre-placement Consultation** (*Applying to Adopt with Pact*)

Pact requires a consultation, around 2 hours in length, preferably face-to-face, or by phone if you don't live in our area, with all prospective adoptive parents of color who wish to apply to adopt with Pact. Our goal is to help you make informed decisions. We want to answer all your questions and present you with additional food for thought –issues that until now you may not have considered, but will be essential to the health and happiness of the child you hope to adopt.

## **Home Study Process**

An adoption home study is designed to ensure that an adoptive family is ready to welcome a child into their home. The process includes completion of paperwork and in-person interviews with the home study practitioner. While the idea of a home study can be intimidating, keep in mind that its entire purpose is to ensure the immediate and long-term well-being of a child. Pact provides home study services for those who reside in the California counties we serve. For families that live outside of Pact's service area, a home study will need to be completed by a full service, licensed adoption agency in their area/state. The home study process typically takes two to three months.

## **Matching/Placement**

All Pact families receive support in creating a profile, which is then presented in possible placement situations that fit their adoption budget and parameters. Matches can occur directly through Pact or through other adoption agencies/professionals seeking pre-adoptive families of color.

## **Post-Placement**

Once a baby has been placed with a family there are required post-placement home visits. The number of visits will vary and will be conducted by Pact, or your home study agency.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## WHY Pact?

Pact is seeking families for children, not children for families. Meeting the needs of the child is always at the center of our work, and we look to work with pre-adoptive parents who want to ensure they are working with an agency that is both ethical and knowledgeable. Our approach to adoption placement and our process is not for everyone, and that's okay. Starting with the pre-placement consultation allows families to see if Pact is the right fit for them.

Pact's placement program is led by professionals who are also personally connected to adoption.

Pact's placement program is led by professionals who are also personally connected to adoption. Working with a child-centered and true options counseling focus, the placement team focuses on ethics, honesty and transparency.

Within the adoption world there has been an increase in online matching sites for pre-adoptive families and expectant parents. These sites do not provide education, support or true options counseling for expectant parents. These sites strongly feature white adoptive parents and do not provide easy access for an expectant parent seeking a family of color. Online matching marginalizes both first/birth parents and families of color and throws them onto emotional roller coasters with no professional support or guidance.

With Pact, you will receive extensive education and support tailored to your needs. While most agencies have large numbers of waiting families, Pact works with a small number of waiting families. Small numbers allow us to provide you with personal attention and means you will not get lost in the crowd. Pact also offers a steep sliding scale for our fees and services, allowing adoption to be affordable for families at all different income levels.

## What are the expectant parents like?

- The majority are experiencing economic stress/poverty.
- They are likely in their 20s or 30s.
- They are sometimes already parenting other children.
- Many have not received early or consistent pre-natal care.
- Some may have used substances during pregnancy.
- Many feel isolated and unsupported.
- They are questioning their ability to parent this baby.
- They are trying to meet the needs of their baby with a plan that also works for their lives.



## Frequently Asked Questions (*cont.*)

### **How does Pact connect with expectant/birth parents?**

Some expectant parents contact us directly. Others come through referrals from agencies, private adoption professionals, lawyers and others working within adoption. We occasionally receive calls from hospitals when a baby is born and an adoptive family is needed.

Pre-adoptive families that work with Pact will know that expectant parents are not being pushed or coerced to place their child because our agenda is to help them explore their choices and make the best plan for their child and their family first. You will know that expectant parents are receiving full options counseling and are supported in discussing parenting, abortion and adoption.

### **How long does an adoption take?**

The first part of the adoption process is entirely in the control of the pre-adoptive family. How long it takes for paperwork, education and a home study to be completed is up to you. Once you have been cleared to adopt a baby, the time it will take to bring a baby home cannot be predicted, as it is the expectant parents, not Pact, who chooses the family for their baby. In adoption, there are far more pre-adoptive families than there are babies available to adopt. You may wait around 6 months or over 3 years.



## Does Pact do transracial placements?

Individuals who wish to adopt across racial lines can be good parents to children who do not share their race if they are willing and capable of supporting their child's heritage. It is essential for families to have strategies that ensure that their lifestyle does not result in racial or cultural isolation for their child. If you are considering adopting across racial lines, Pact has special educational and support programs in place to help you anticipate and meet the needs of transracial adoption. We have learned that white families who join our program take much longer to be chosen than the the families led by parents of color that make up the bulk of our clients and placements.

## How much does it cost?

Pact's fees are set on a steep sliding scale based on family income and assets. Our most up-to-date fee schedule can be found on our website. You will likely find that our fees are less than other adoption programs, and Pact never bases fees on the race of the child being adopted. Finally, Pact families set their own adoption budget and are only presented in possible placement situations that fit within their set budget.



# Frequently Asked Questions (*cont.*)

## What is Open Adoption?

An open adoption means there is direct contact between the adopting family and the first/birth family. This term includes a wide range of variations. “Contact” can range from an annual exchange of letters and pictures to regular phone calls or in-person visits. All Pact adoptions are some version of open.

## What we know is that closed adoption has not worked ideally for adopted people.

Many adoptees have grown up feeling they didn’t fit, feeling something was missing, feeling confused about where they came from and feeling it would

be a betrayal of their adoptive parents and family, whom they love, to ask questions or seek information about their birth family. Open adoption developed as an answer to these haunting questions. Open adoption is not co-parenting; open adoption embodies honest acceptance of the truth in adoption — each adopted person has two families and each family is central to who they are.

Pact supports and encourages open adoption where birth and adoptive family members plan for and maintain ongoing contact throughout the life journey of their adopted child.



# What Pact Believes

- Every child has a right to a family.
- Family preservation should be explored and encouraged first.
- Children have immediate needs that can't be secondary to adult needs.
- Adoption can be a positive reproductive choice when done ethically.
- When adoption placement happens, the child is our primary client.
- Adoption is not a one-time event; it is a lifetime journey.
- Not everyone should adopt.
- Adoption matters.
- An open adoption with direct contact between families serves adopted children best.
- Race matters.
- Racism affects all of us.
- Same-race placements are less complicated for children than transracial placements.
- Transracial families can serve children if parents create meaningful connections to their child's heritage communities.
- It is not true that "love is enough" — adoptive parents need knowledge, understanding, and commitment to support their child's identity.



# Adoption Glossary

**Pregnant** — An individual is carrying an embryo or fetus in their body.

**Expectant Mother/Parent** — A woman/individual who is pregnant, planning to continue the pregnancy and exploring her/their options. Thinking about or planning for adoption does not impact her/their legal rights to parent the child once born.

**Expectant Father/Parent** — A man/individual who has impregnated a woman/individual; they are planning to continue the pregnancy. He/they may have legal rights to parent the child even if the expectant mother/parent is thinking about or planning for adoption.

**Family Preservation** — Empowering expectant parents by connecting them with resources they need to raise their child and keep their family together.

**Relinquishment** — A legal process where mothers and fathers sign court documents that end their rights to be a parent to their child.

**\*First/Birth Mother/Parent** — A woman/individual who gave birth to a child and relinquishes their rights to be that child's parent, or whose rights have been terminated.

**\*First/Birth Father/Parent** — A man/individual who is the biological father/parent of an adopted child and relinquishes their rights to be that child's parent, or whose rights have been terminated.

**Adoptee/Adopted** — A child or adult whose first/birth parents are no longer their legal parents, who has other parent(s) as their legal parents.

**Adoptive Parent(s)** — An adult who becomes the new legal parent(s) of a child.

**Open Adoption** — The adoptee has ongoing knowledge of, access to, and a meaningful relationship with their first/birth family.

**Contact Agreement** — Available in some states, including California, this is a legal document that describes the kind of open relationship the first/birth parents and adoptive parent(s) have agreed to.

**Same-Race Adoption** — An adoptee shares the racial identity of at least one of their adoptive parents.

**Transracial Adoption** — An adoptee does not share the racial identity of either of their adoptive parents.

**\*Why First or Birth?** — People who have placed a child for adoption use both terms to describe themselves. "First parent" is a new term that acknowledges the parent's role as more than biological or giving birth. "Birth parent" is the more common term. Either one is fine to use.

# Who We Are

Pact is a full-service adoption agency, licensed by the State of California (#015202691). We are a national non-profit that has been involved in promoting ethical, anti-racist adoption practices since 1992. Our staff is racially diverse and has not only professional training, but direct personal experience with adoption.

## **Katie Wynen, MSW (she/her)**

*Agency Social Worker and LGBTQ Advocate*



Katie Wynen is a transracial, international adoptee from Colombia, and she has worked with members of the adoption triad since 2006. As an adoptee and a social worker, Katie is committed to supporting and educating prospective adoptive parents for the lifelong journey of adoption and is always willing to share from an adoptee perspective. Katie is an Angels in Adoption 2019 Recipient from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute.

## **Susan Dusza Guerra Leksander, LMFT (she/her)**

*Adoption Agency Supervisor & First/Birth Family Specialist*



Susan is a first mother who placed her child for adoption in 2001. She is also a transracially adopted Latina woman who understands adoption from the adoptee's perspective. She is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who has been working with all members of the adoption triad since 2008.

**Meet our entire staff on our website: [www.pactadopt.org](http://www.pactadopt.org)**



# Pact Can Help You with the Lifelong Journey of Adoption

In our commitment to serving adopted children of color, Pact offers extensive child-centered, race-conscious, honesty-based webinars, local support groups for adoption triad members, youth programming for tweens/teens, family education and event days, Pact Family Camp and more pre- and post-placement education, support and community opportunities and programs.

- **Webinars:** Pact hosts 90- and 120-minute webinars on the topics of adoption, parenting, race and community for adoptees and their families on matters of adoption and race.
- **Support Groups:** Pact hosts and supports local and national groups that support first/birth parents, adoptees of color, adoptive parents of color and others. Groups are in person, via video/phone calls and on Facebook.
- **Youth & Family Programming**
  - » **Pact Family Camp:** A weeklong summer retreat for adopted youth of color and their families.
  - » **Youth Clubs** in California: Monthly club meetings for 10-18-year-old adopted and fostered youth of color.
  - » **Family Gatherings** in California: Educational and social opportunities for adoptive families.
- **Conferences and Workshops** in California
- **Professional Trainings** for schools, clinics/hospitals and mental health providers who serve adoptive families of color.

If you would like to learn more about adopting with Pact, we invite you to contact us.







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Pact, an adoption alliance

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