

## Pennsylvania Adoption Act of 1970

The Pennsylvania Adoption Act of 1970 was a significant overhaul of the state's adoption laws, enacted to update and clarify previous statutes. Effective January 1, 1971, the act repealed the prior Adoption Act of 1925 and incorporated substantive changes to streamline adoption practices. [🔗](#)

### Key provisions and changes

#### Legal framework and structure

- The act provided a concise, six-article structure that replaced the often unclear language of the previous law.
- It mandated a strict procedure for all adoptions, establishing that adoption in Pennsylvania is a purely statutory process, not based on common law. [🔗](#)

#### Parental rights and consent

- **Voluntary relinquishment:** For a child under 18, the act created a formal process for a parent to voluntarily relinquish all parental rights to either an individual or an agency.
- **Involuntary termination:** The law expanded the grounds for involuntarily terminating parental rights. This was to prevent children from being perpetually tied to parents who had little regard for their welfare.
- **Standard for termination:** For involuntary termination, a court could remove parental rights if the parent had, for at least six months, demonstrated a settled purpose to relinquish their claim to the child or failed to perform their parental duties.
- **Consent:** The act specified who must consent to an adoption and when consent is not required, such as in cases where parental rights have been terminated or the child is an adult. [🔗](#)

#### Adoption process

- **Pre-adoption proceedings:** It created formal pre-adoption proceedings, including provisions for reporting the intention to adopt, investigations, and intermediary reports.
- **Placement with an agency:** If an agency was awarded custody after the termination of parental rights, it assumed all parental rights and duties, making the child available for adoption without further consent from the birth parents.
- **Child's welfare:** The law prioritized the welfare of the child by expanding the grounds for involuntary termination to facilitate adoption when birth parents could not or would not provide for the child's well-being. [🔗](#)

#### Legacy and later developments

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#### Legacy and later developments

- The Adoption Act of 1970 became a cornerstone of Pennsylvania's adoption law for decades.
- In the 1980s, the Joint State Government Commission staff redrafted the act to be consolidated into the new state law, but many of the original provisions from 1970 were retained.
- The law has undergone numerous amendments over the years to reflect changing social norms and best practices in child welfare. For instance, later amendments addressed issues like open adoption agreements and access to adoption records. [🔗](#)

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