



Fact Sheet

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Facts about the Academy

- ▼ The American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (AAAA) is an Academy of approximately 300 members throughout the U.S. and Canada who are experts in the complexities of adoption law and the variety of international regulations surrounding adoption.
- ▼ Membership is invitational. Fellows all have acted as counsel in at least 50 adoption proceedings, including 20 interstate placements, and must maintain their practice according to the highest standards of competence and professionalism.
- ▼ The AAAA is a not-for-profit organization. It has a number of committees dedicated to the improvement of adoption law and its ethical practice. Among others, the committees include the Adoption Agency Accreditation, Assisted Reproduction, Ethics, Foster Care, Legislative, International Adoption, Interstate Compact and Internet Communications.

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Send mail to webmaster@adoptionattorneys.org with questions or comments about this web site.



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The American Academy of Adoption Attorneys is a national association of attorneys who practice, or have otherwise distinguished themselves, in the field of adoption law. The Academy includes promoting the reform of adoption laws and disseminating information on ethical adoption practices. The Academy publishes a newsletter, holds annual meetings, and educates seminars.

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Attorney referrals

Visit the [Directory of Members](#) on this website.

The American Academy of Adoption Attorneys has members throughout the U.S. and Canada who are experts in the complexities of adoption law as well as interstate and international regulations surrounding adoption. The Academy is the largest and most accessible resource for finding an adoption attorney.



Legislation

Up **Legislative Activities**

AAAA members participate in both state and national legislative activities, including offering expert testimony to legislators and assisting in the drafting of new state laws.

- ▶ The AAAA is working with the President's Adoption 2002 Initiative which seeks to double the number of children moving out of the foster care system and into adoptive families and other situations by the year 2002. AAAA is a member of a expert working group assigned to the issue of "options for legal permanence."
- ▶ The AAAA is encouraging Congress to support amendments to the Indian Child Welfare Act, which will help ensure that adoptions of children with varying degrees of Native-American ancestry are conducted efficiently and conclusively as possible and with due regard to the child's cultural background.
- ▶ The AAAA is an active participant in drafting the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption legislation, which is currently pending before the U.S. Congress. The AAAA is designing the standards by which conducting intercountry adoptions will receive approval under the Hague Convention.
- ▶ The AAAA was an advisor to the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws in drafting the Uniform Adoption Act of 1994, which provides the states with a uniform approach to adoption procedure.

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Click on [Map](#) or underlined link for [Member Directory](#) to locate an adoption attorney.



Welcome!

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The American Academy of Adoption Attorneys is a national association of approximately 340 attorneys who practice, or have otherwise distinguished themselves, in the field of adoption law. The Academy's work includes promoting the reform of adoption laws and disseminating information on ethical adoption practices. The Academy publishes a newsletter, holds annual meetings, and hosts professional educational seminars.

Please review what you should consider when [Retaining an Attorney](#) as well as tips on how to choose an attorney. The [Member Directory](#) is an excellent resource to locate an adoption attorney. The [Agency Directory](#) will help you locate an agency affiliated with an AAAA member. Detailed [Academy Information](#) is also available.



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American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (AAAA) Submits Official Reply to Bureau of Indian Affairs in Response to Proposed ICWA Amendments

May 13, 2015 08:30 AM Eastern Daylight Time

WASHINGTON--(BUSINESS WIRE)--The nation's largest constituent group of adoption attorneys, law professors and judges submitted a [45-page response](#) to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) concerning the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), a federal law established in 1978. The BIA announced earlier this year its attempt to amend the federal law. The AAAA's formal response outlines a series of concerns the organization has with the BIA's proposed amendments. The response, submitted to the U.S. Department of Interior, points out constitutional issues, as well as concerns addressing the Department's possible violation of its statutory authority to develop such regulations.

The ICWA applies to any child who is either a member or eligible to be a member of a federally recognized tribe where a custody determination is being made. While the BIA and other proponents of the federal law are focused on bolstering its applicability, AAAA expressed grave concerns with the BIA's latest attempt to alter the federal law stating, "they are contrary to the best interests of Indian children, Indian parents, and will only foster increased litigation and constitutional challenges".

The BIA has issued a deadline of May 19 for all public comments related to the proposed changes to the ICWA. AAAA's response, authored by more than a half dozen adoption experts on behalf of the organization, outlines how the BIA lacks statutory authority to promulgate the proposed changes, some of which state that the best interest of a child standard need not be considered when state courts make custody determinations.

AAAA's response describes how Congress did not grant the Department of Interior authority to exercise supervision over state and tribal courts or for them to legislate matters as it relates to custody cases involving Indian children. The response also emphasizes serious concerns about the lack of constitutionality regarding the proposed regulations related to equal protections, state rights, due process, and the civil rights of birth parents and children.

The final public hearing, after a series of hearings held between April 22 and May 14 by the BIA, will be held at the Marriott Southern Hills in Tulsa, Oklahoma on Thursday, May 14. The hearing is open to the public.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ADOPTION ATTORNEYS

The American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (AAAA) is the nation's largest organization represented by attorneys, judges and law professors who are dedicated to enhancing and improving the practice of adoption law. AAAA's mission is to support the rights of children to live in safe, permanent homes with loving families, to ensure appropriate consideration of the interests of all parties to adoptions, and to assist in the orderly and legal process of adoption. Fellows of the AAAA are by invitation only and represent adoptive parents, birth parents, adoption agencies and others involved in adoptions and they must maintain their practice according to the highest standards of professionalism, competence and ethics. AAAA supports the protection and security of children by affirming the right of individuals and couples: to adopt children, to serve as foster parents, and to become legal parents of children born through the use of assisted reproductive technology, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, race, color, age, religion, national origin, political belief, or disability. To learn more about the AAAA, visit www.adoptionattorneys.org. To follow AAAA on social media, visit <https://www.facebook.com/AdoptionAcademy> and on Twitter @AdoptionAcademy.

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DELAYS/CLOSINGS

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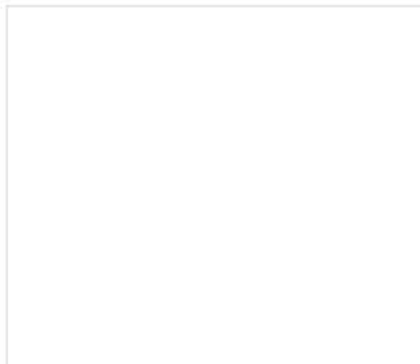
Ohio Supreme court ruling puts adoption of toddler in limbo

Five words in Ohio law may force a Tennessee couple to give back a Butler County boy they legally adopted as a newborn two years ago to the boy's presumed biological father.

Author: Chris Graves, Cincinnati Enquirer, WKYC
Published: 7:08 AM EDT July 27, 2017
Updated: 7:08 AM EDT July 27, 2017

Five words in Ohio law may force a Tennessee couple to give back a Butler County boy they legally adopted as a newborn two years ago to the boy's presumed biological father.

That outcome is the result of an Ohio Supreme Court ruling last week that found a presumed father of a child born out of wedlock is not required to support the birth mother in order to maintain his right to contest her decision to put the child up for adoption.



In making that ruling, Ohio's highest court vacated a 2015 Butler County adoption of a newborn boy, which was arranged and agreed upon by the baby's mother who was then a Miami University engineering student, even though the presumed father, a former Redhawks linebacker, contested the adoption.

At issue in the case was the interpretation of the phrases: "willfully abandon" and "care and support," as it relates to the pregnant mother in such cases.

It's unclear who currently has custody of the now 20-month-old, referred to as P.L.H. in court documents. And the court did not prescribe who should have custody of the toddler.

But the lawyer for the toddler's presumed father said he has filed for sole custody.

"This is a victory," said Michaela Stagnaro, of the Cincinnati-based Farrish Law Firm. "My client wanted custody of his son and this allows him to have that."

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One-time sexual encounter leads to pregnancy and legal case



The case dates to February 2015 when Sarah Chapman, who was working as a mechanical engineering intern at Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom theme park in Florida, was invited and traveled to Louisiana to celebrate Mardi Gras with her former classmate and Miami engineering graduate Christopher Wade over Valentine's Day weekend.

Wade is a Louisiana native who was living with his grandmother and mother at the time. He has since moved to Detroit, according to records.

Chapman, now 24, became pregnant on that trip and within weeks notified Wade, now 26, of her plan for adoption. The two communicated sporadically via text message and did not see each other again.



It wasn't until Chapman sent adoption consent forms to Wade in September for him to sign that he objected. According to court records, he said he would not sign them without talking to his mother. His lawyer then sent a letter saying he would seek sole custody and enclosed a copy of Wade's Putative Father Registry form.

A putative father is one who is presumed to be the father but has not established paternity to a child. Most states, including Ohio, have a putative father registry, which allows a man to register if he believes he may have fathered a child and wants to be notified if the child is placed for adoption.

Wade, who was making \$70,000 at the time, said he would help her with medical costs, according to the court records. But he never did. He did, however, send \$100 check after the child was born, according to court records.

The boy was born Nov. 3, 2015. Three days later, Butler County Probate Court approved Chapman's petition for adoption and the baby was legally adopted by the couple, who is not named in the records.

A fellow with the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (AAAA), which joined in the case on the side of the adoptive parents, said she believes lawyers representing Chapman and the adoptive parents are reviewing their legal options to maintain the adoption.

Those options could include: The adoptive parents filing a motion for reconsideration or Chapman filing a federal civil rights claim made under the due process clause of Fourteenth Amendment, she said.

"This could continue with the child in limbo," Susan Garner Eisenman, of the AAAA, noted.

Did he "willfully abandon" her?

According to court records, Wade said he was never notified of the birth and only discovered it when he saw a picture of Chapman on Facebook. He then filed to establish paternity and to gain temporary custody of the child.

During a hearing, the Butler County Probate Court found that under Ohio adoption law, Wade