

ADOPTION LEAVE GUIDANCE

A Resource from Mother's Choice



WHAT IS ADOPTION?

Building a family takes love and commitment, and parents may choose to adopt for many different reasons. Adoption is a wonderful and equally valid way to build a family.

Adoption is the legal transfer of parental rights and responsibilities to the adoptive parents. Adopted children are entitled to the same rights as any biological children in the family.

HOW DOES THE ADOPTION PROCESS WORK?

Adoptions in Hong Kong are overseen by the Social Welfare Department. An employee hoping to adopt will go through the following adoption process:

Application: The application process is 9-12 months and your employee will need to show they have supportive and stable employment as part of their suitability assessment. They may need flexibility in their work day to attend interviews and trainings.

Waiting: Your employee can officially inform you of their adoption approval and will begin waiting to be matched with a child. This can take a short or long period of time depending on the families and children.

Matching: Your employee will be able to inform you of the good news that they are matched with a child! Depending on the age of the child, they will have a 2 to 8 week transition to meet and visit the child before bringing them home.

Adoption Leave: Your employee will welcome the child home and will need to focus on bonding with them. They will receive a letter from the Social Welfare Department (SWD) which gives authority to care for the child, while the SWD remains the legal guardian.

Home Visits: For around 6 months, the family will be visited by the Social Welfare Department to see how the child is settling and how the family is doing.

Adoption Finalization: The adoption will be legally finalized by the court. Your employee is now legally their child's parent. This means the child will be able to access any health insurance or educational benefits included within your employee's contract.

WHAT IS ADOPTION LEAVE?

Adoption Leave is parental leave for mothers and fathers for a period after their adoptive child is placed in their home. Unlike maternity and paternity leave, Hong Kong has no statutory adoption leave.

This can leave employees who adopt in a vulnerable position as they may not be granted the same benefits and support as their peers who have a child through birth. Therefore, to cover this gap, employers can make specific provisions to include adoption leave within their company policies.

"Leaders across all sectors are becoming increasingly aware that adoption leave policies are a way for companies to have life-long impact on the community in Hong Kong"
- Alia Eyres, CEO, Mother's Choice

WHY IS ADOPTION LEAVE IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?

Families who choose to adopt children face a number of challenges in their journey to build their family through adoption, and the support of their employer can make an immense difference in their experience of parenthood.

Children waiting for adoption have complex family backgrounds and are unable to be cared for by their birth family. All adopted infants and children will have experiences of separation, loss, instability, and trauma, and will grieve their former caregivers, even as they join their new loving, forever family. These children need extended time to build trust with their new mothers and fathers to form healthy attachments for their future.

Parents need time to be available to show their child how they will love and care for them. For some parents, this will be their first experience of parenthood - suddenly there is a lot to learn and process emotionally. Parents feel less stressed knowing that they have the support of their employers and the understanding of their teams. This enables them to solely focus on learning how to care for and love their new child, and helping their child feel safe in their new home.

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"As the definition and gender composition of families evolve over time, companies may choose to redefine their policies to ensure inclusivity. To attract and retain skilled global talent, and manage a diverse global workforce" – Mercer's 2016 Global Parental Leave Report.

WHY DO EMPLOYERS OFFER ADOPTION BENEFITS?

- Many countries around the world have **statutory paid** and unpaid Adoption Leave policies, including Singapore (3 months), Australia (12 months), UK (12 months), Japan (12 months), Sweden (18 months).
- They are **low-cost benefits** generally used by less than 1% of eligible employees.
- They **increase employee loyalty, retention, and productivity**, which lay a foundation for business growth.
- For the competitive edge in **recruiting** new employees.
- To enhance a company's family-friendly and social impact **image**.
- To validate adoptive parents as equal parents and **reduce stigma** on adoption in the community.
- To **give employees time** to bond with their children.
- To help move children from residential care to safe, loving, and permanent adoptive homes.

BUILDING AND PROMOTING ADOPTION LEAVE POLICIES

What are the next steps for my company to take?

1. Build a clear adoption leave **policy** that recognizes adoptive parenthood as equal to biological parenthood.
2. Include provision for **paid leave** and unpaid leave, as well as flexibility in leave options, work schedules, and working from home.
3. Include both **fathers and mothers** as part of the policy, recognizing that children need time to bond with both parents, and include every child who is adopted, regardless of their age.
4. Promote adoption leave policies **internally** so that employees fully understand their benefits and support from their employer.
5. Publicly **launch** your adoption leave policy to demonstrate your company's commitment to vulnerable children in the community.

Further Resources

- [Mother's Choice - Adoption-Friendly Workplaces](#)
- [Mother's Choice Local Adoption Guide](#)
- [Hong Kong Social Welfare Department Adoption Unit](#)
- [Hong Kong Family Friendly Employment Practices](#)
- [Top 100 "Adoption-Friendly Workplaces"](#)



Don't forget to **Celebrate** and **Congratulate** your employee on their adoption and their commitment to being a safe, loving, and permanent family for their child.

Mother's Choice is a local Hong Kong organization serving children without families and pregnant teenagers. Our vision is to see every child in a loving family. We are an accredited Adoption Services Provider of the Hong Kong Social Welfare Department Adoption Unit. Mother's Choice has been providing adoption services for over 30 years to prepare, assess, equip, and empower families to provide a loving, stable and permanent home where children can thrive, and we support families after their adoption.