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Can Adoption Be More Cost-Effective Than Childbirth?

Sally Stratmann

The University of Texas at Tyler

| AVERAGE COST TO ADOPT DOMESTICALLY | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| | PRIVATE NEWBORN AGENCY | PRIVATE NEWBORN ATTORNEY | U.S. FOSTER |
| PREPARATION | | | |
| Homestudy | \$1,821 | \$1,768 | \$408 |
| Documentation & authentication | \$824 | \$482 | |
| ADOPTION | | | |
| Application & program fee | \$13,829 | \$3,938 | |
| Attorney fees | \$3,101 | \$8,087 | \$627 |
| Advertising/networking | \$1,717 | \$1,920 | |
| Birth family counseling | \$694 | \$1,048 | |
| Birthmother expenses | \$2,973 | \$3,416 | |
| Foster care | \$159 | \$0 | |
| Travel expenses | \$1,799 | \$1,895 | \$443 |
| Other expenses | \$4,031 | \$3,190 | \$482 |
| TOTAL* | \$30,948 | \$25,743 | \$1,960 |

* Before the \$13,170 tax credit per adoption attempt;
SOURCE: AF's 2008-2009 Cost & Timing of Adoption Survey.

Comparing Costs

Adoption:

- Some governments will actually pay the adoptive parents to adopt a child with disabilities, and in the United States, that cost in almost nothing.
- Adopting an infant or child in the foster care system is typically \$2,000 or less.
- International adoptions can be upwards of \$50,000 with the expenses of travel and in-country fees.
- There is also an adoption tax credit through the government that averages roughly \$13,000 for each eligible child.
- Businesses sometimes offer employer adoption assistance, decreasing the cost even further.

Costs of Childbirth:

- Childbirth can be very cheap or very expensive depending on the way the baby is delivered as well as the insurance or lack thereof of the birthmother.
- A health vaginal birth is estimated to cost between \$5,000 and \$10,000, without insurance.
- A cesarean section is estimated at roughly \$15,000.
- Birthing centers, run by midwives, are typically much cheaper.
- Pregnancies with complications will usually raise this price.

Conclusions:

- Adoption can be cheaper than childbirth and vice versa
- Foster care adoptions or the adoptions of disabled children have the lowest cost of adoptions within the United States
- International adoptions are typically the most expensive.
- Child birth can be completely covered by insurance or Medicaid
- Babies of a certain race or gender are "cheaper" to adopt than others
- Adoption has an emotional price tag for both the adoptive parents and the birthmother and birthfather

Extraneous Factors:

Birthmothers will sometimes require that the adoptive parents pay for the expenses of her pregnancy and those of her adoption lawyer, and the adoptive parents must take on all legal fees and hospital fees as well as the typical adoption costs.

Fees also change depending on the sex and race of the baby. African American babies are about \$8,000 less to adopt than white or Hispanic babies and baby girls on average cost \$2,000 more than baby boys. This may be due to the fact that Medicaid will cover pregnancy costs and sometimes delivery fees. Because fewer white women are on Medicaid than minority women, pregnancy and hospital delivery fees are often added to the adoption of a white baby and not to that of a black one. Another factor could be that Caucasian babies have a demand that is seven times higher than that of black babies.

Many adoption agencies have a sliding scale based on the income of the adoptive parents in order to make adoption more feasible, as opposed to "pricing" children and babies differently.

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