

The following charts compare some of the main legal differences between informal relative caregivers, legal guardians, and adoptive parents. Note that legal guardianship can be obtained through probate, dependency or delinquency court.

INFORMAL CUSTODY	LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP	ADOPTION
<i>Parents have full rights, including the right to reclaim the child at any time</i>	<i>Parents' rights suspended and transferred temporarily to legal guardian; parent must go to court to terminate the legal guardianship before reclaiming the child</i>	<i>Parent's rights are terminated. The adoptive parent becomes the child's legal parent.</i>



Photo by: Hugh Williams