# CARA issues nationwide directions to strengthen adoption procedures, safeguard records and protect children's identity

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## News

The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), under the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development, issued three Office Memorandums to all State/UT Adoption Resource Agencies (SARAs) under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 and the Adoption Regulations, 2022 (Ministry notification: 16 March 2026). (1) No child may be declared 'legally free for adoption' until due inquiry, tracing of biological parents and restoration efforts are complete; the two-month reconsideration period for surrendered children is mandatory. (2) Physical and digital records must be preserved and handed over to a designated authority even if an adoption agency or child care institution closes – this helps adult adoptees in 'root search'. (3) Under Section 74, photographs, videos or identifying details of children must not be disclosed anywhere, including social media; violations attract penal action under Section 74(3).

## Key facts

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| **Issued** | CARA – 3 Office Memorandums; Ministry notification 16 March 2026 |
| **Legal basis** | Juvenile Justice Act 2015 (amended 2021); Adoption Regulations 2022 |
| **CARA** | Set up 1990; statutory body under Sec 68 of JJ Act; HQ New Delhi |
| **Ministry** | Ministry of Women and Child Development |

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| **Section 74** | Bar on disclosing children's identity; 74(3) – penalty |
| **Hague Convention** | Inter-country adoption – 1993; India ratified 2003; CARA = Central Authority |

## Background

- CARA was set up in 1990; Section 68 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 gave it statutory status. It is the nodal body that monitors and regulates in-country and inter-country adoption of orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children. SARAs work at State level and Specialised Adoption Agencies (SAAs) at the field level.
- Procedure: a child is declared 'legally free for adoption' by the district Child Welfare Committee (CWC). Under the JJ Act, adoption orders are issued by the District Magistrate (after the 2021 amendment). The Act applies to all Indians irrespective of religion.
- Personal law: the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 (HAMA) applies to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs; for Muslims and Christians the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890 provides only guardianship.
- International: Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption (1993) – India ratified it in 2003; CARA is its Central Authority. Any sale or payment in adoption is illegal.

**Tamil Nadu link:** to stop female infanticide, the 'Cradle Baby Scheme' began in Salem district in 1992 under CM Jayalalithaa; it was extended to Madurai, Theni, Dindigul and Dharmapuri in 2001 and to Cuddalore, Ariyalur, Perambalur, Villupuram and Tiruvannamalai in 2011. Babies received in the cradles are sent to licensed adoption centres.


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