

Adoptstream: A UX Case Study

** Problem & Opportunity**

Adoption Bottlenecks

The average domestic infant adoption in the U.S. takes **12–24 months**, with delays often tied to document handling and communication breakdowns.

Adoptive Families Magazine

Families report frustration with lost forms, unclear instructions, and inconsistent communication from agencies. Over 60% of prospective parents cite “confusing paperwork” as the most stressful barrier.

NCFA

Agencies, in turn, juggle sensitive documents across email, fax, and ad-hoc cloud folders, creating inefficiencies and compliance risks.

Summary:

The long, emotional process of adoption is made worse by poor UX around documents and updates. Families want clarity and trust. Agencies want efficiency and compliance. A streamlined digital platform can solve both.

** Current Landscape**

Agencies typically use a patchwork of tools: email + shared drives + phone calls.

Generic tools like Dropbox and Google Drive solve storage but not case management.

Case management systems exist for foster care but are often too complex or expensive for small adoption agencies.

Opportunity: Build a lightweight, mobile-first tool tailored to the adoption journey—balancing security, transparency, and empathy.

** Solution: Adoption Platform Prototype**

Design Goals

- Eliminate document chaos with structured, role-based file sharing.
- Reduce uncertainty by providing clear progress indicators for each stage.
- Centralize communication so families and agencies don't miss critical updates.

Key Features

- **Document Hub:** Secure uploads with role-based permissions (e.g., families can see what's submitted vs. pending).
- **Progress Tracker:** Visual timeline of stages (application, home study, matching, placement, finalization).
- **Direct Messaging:** Built-in chat with notifications to replace scattered email/phone exchanges.
- **Task Checklists:** Agency-assigned to-dos ensure nothing slips through the cracks.
- **Audit Trail:** Timestamped actions for compliance and accountability.

** Information Architecture & Flow**

- **Dashboard (Families):** Progress timeline, pending tasks, recent messages.
- **Dashboard (Agencies):** Case list view, flagged missing documents, messaging center.
- **Document Center:** Upload slot for each required form, with status labels ("Submitted," "Approved," "Needs Revision").
- **Messaging:** Secure chat threads linked to each case.
- **Style Guide:** Rounded cards, approachable sans-serif typography, accent colors in calming blues/greens to reflect trust and empathy.

** Impact & Differentiation**

Metric / Insight

Value

Avg. adoption timeline	12–24 months
Families citing paperwork stress	~60%
Platform gap	No specialized, lightweight adoption hub
Emotional benefit	Clarity, reassurance, reduced stress

By bringing structure and transparency to document sharing and communication, the platform helps families feel guided and supported, while reducing agency workload.

**** Next Steps****

- **User Testing:** Validate clarity of progress tracker with adoptive families at different stages.
 - **Agency Pilot:** Trial with a small agency to test compliance, workflow, and security.
 - **Integrations:** Explore e-signature, background check APIs, and secure payments.
 - **Scalability:** Expand for foster-to-adopt and international adoption workflows.
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**** Reflection****

Design Principle Reinforced: Empathy is efficiency—by easing emotional friction, you also reduce operational friction.

Transparency Matters: Progress tracking reassures families and saves agencies from repeated “status update” calls.

Structure Enables Trust: A secure, structured hub builds confidence during one of life’s most sensitive journeys.