

5-309-

(a) -- Any adult OR FOSTER PARENT may petition a court to decree an adoption.

(b) -- A court may not deny a petition for adoption solely because the petitioner is single or does not have a spouse.

5-312-

(a) (1) -- This section applies only to independent adoptions in which a natural parent withholds consent.

(2) -- This section does not permit a licensed or approved foster parent to petition a court for adoption of a child who was placed with the foster parent by a child placement agency unless the child placement agency consents.

(b) -- Without the consent of the child's natural parent, a court may grant a decree of adoption to a stepparent, relative, or other individual who has exercised physical care, custody, or control of a child for at least 1 year, if by clear and convincing evidence the court finds that:

(1) -- it is in the best interest of the child to terminate the natural parent's rights as to the child;

(2) -- the child has been out of the custody of the natural parent for at least 3 years;

(3) -- the child has developed significant feelings toward and emotional ties with the petitioner; and

(4) -- the natural parent:

(i) -- has not maintained meaningful contact with the child during the time the petitioner has had custody despite the opportunity to do so;

(ii) -- has repeatedly failed to contribute to the physical care and support of the child although financially able to do so; or

(iii) -- has been convicted of child abuse of the child.

(c) -- In determining whether it is in the best interest of the child to terminate a natural parent's rights as to the child under this section, the court shall request:

(i) -- an investigation by an appropriate agency; and