

If you (or your partner) are pregnant and not sure if you are ready to raise a child, adoption could be on your mind. Getting the facts about adoption can help you decide if it is an option that is right for you.

What is adoption?

- ✓ Adoption is the legal placement of a child with another person or family who will raise the child as their own.
- ✓ It is a process that must be finalized in court.
- ✓ There are different types of adoptions and it is important to understand your options.
- ✓ To begin an adoption process, you can contact an adoption agency or adoption attorney.

What does an adoption agency do?

- ✓ An agency can be public or private. Services it may provide include:
 - Screening potential adoptive families.
 - Counseling for the birth parents thinking about adoption.
 - Helping with any housing or medical needs during pregnancy.
 - Counseling for birth parents and adoptive families after the adoption.

What is a private adoption?

- ✓ Adoptions arranged by a lawyer rather than an agency are called private adoptions.
- ✓ A lawyer will help the birth parents find an adoptive family, complete the paperwork and deal with other legal aspects of the process.
- ✓ Some states do not allow private adoptions.

An adoption can be open.

- ✓ In an open adoption, birth parents and adoptive parents agree to share certain information about one another.
- ✓ Each open adoption varies.
 - You may be able to learn about and choose the family who will adopt your child, but not know one another's names or addresses.
 - In other cases, you can meet the adoptive family and stay in touch with them.
 - In some open adoptions, the birth parents may have contact with the child.

An adoption can be confidential.

- ✓ A confidential adoption means that the birth parents and adoptive parents do not know one another.
- ✓ Only necessary medical information about the birth parents will be given to the adoptive parents.
- ✓ Birth parents will not be told anything about the adoptive family or where the child is placed.
- ✓ If you want the child to be able to find you once he or she is an adult, you can leave contact information with the agency or with a national registry.

What is a waiting period?

- ✓ Every state has different laws about how soon after birth a baby can be placed for adoption. Some have a waiting period.
- ✓ A waiting period allows the birth parents time to change their minds.
- ✓ Waiting periods vary from state to state.
- ✓ To complete an adoption, the birth parents must sign a form that says they are giving up rights to parent the child.
- ✓ Birth parents can take days or weeks to sign the form. There are no laws setting a deadline.



What are the rights of the father?

- ✓ In most cases, if the father wants to have a say in the adoption process, or raise the child himself, he must take steps to legally claim that he is the father.

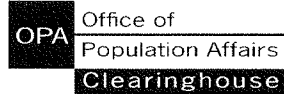


Making the decision ...

- ✓ Placing your child for adoption is a personal choice that takes careful thought. It is a permanent decision.
- ✓ If you are thinking about adoption, talk with a counselor who can help you decide if it is the right option for you.
- ✓ Places that offer free or low-cost counseling include:
 - Local social or family service agencies
 - Family planning clinics
 - Adoption agencies
- ✓ You will feel better about any decision you make knowing that you have fully explored your feelings and options.

You can get more information about adoption by visiting www.childwelfare.gov/adoption on the Internet. Or talk with your health care provider to learn about services in your area.

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If you have questions or concerns, please talk with
a health care provider.

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INFORMATION FOR BIRTH PARENTS

The Adoption Option



GET THE FACTS