



When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy, one of your choices is to complete your pregnancy and let someone else raise your child. If you choose to place your child up for adoption, there are many issues to consider. The following information can help you understand what your options are.

### **Closed vs. Open Adoption**

A closed adoption is when you do not know the names of the adoptive parents and they do not know your name. All information about either side is kept completely confidential.

An open adoption is when you choose the adoptive parents for your child. If you both agree, you can get to know your child's adoptive family and have an ongoing relationship with them.

### **Which is better – Open or Closed Adoption?**

No one can say for sure, but it may help you to know what other birthparents and adoptive parents think. Many birthparents and adoptive parents are finding that some openness in the adoption is better for them while some find the opposite to be true. It is important for you to decide what you think would be best for you and your child.

### **Agency vs. Independent Adoption**

An *agency adoption* is when you allow an adoption agency to place your child in an adoptive home.

An *independent adoption* is when you place your child in an adoptive home with the help of an attorney.

### **What are the benefits of an agency adoption?**

If you decide to use the services of an adoption agency, you should look for either a private or public organization that is licensed by the government. Adoption agencies will provide you with counseling, help you handle any legal matters that may come up, make hospital arrangements for your child's birth, select a home for your child, and refer you to agencies that can help you

financially. Adoption agencies tend to offer both closed and open adoptions.

### **How can I find an adoption agency?**

There are many religious organizations that can help you find an adoption agency. You can also look in your local *Yellow Pages* under "Adoption Agencies." Also, the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse can refer you to an agency in your area. Call toll-free, 1-888-251-0075 or check out their website: [naic.acf.hhs.gov](http://naic.acf.hhs.gov)

### **What are the benefits of an independent adoption?**

Independent adoptions are legal in most states but you should check with your state government office to find out if they are legal where you live. If you decide to pursue an independent adoption, you will most likely do an open adoption. In some cases, the adoptive parents will agree to pay for your hospital and medical bills, and your living expenses while you are pregnant. Usually, the adoptive parents will hire an attorney to represent both them and you, but you should also consider having one of your own. If you choose to have a relative or someone you know adopt your baby, you will still need to hire a lawyer to help you through the legal process of adoption.

For more information and referrals about independent adoption call the Independent Adoption Center hotline at 1-800-877-6376 or check out their website: [www.adoptionhelp.org](http://www.adoptionhelp.org)

### **What if I change my mind and don't want to go through with the adoption?**

You have a right to change your mind within a certain time limit. You will have to sign a legal paper called a "take into care" form that says you willingly give up all your parental rights to this child. Once you have signed the consent paper, states have different laws about the time you have to change your mind. Ask your adoption agency or lawyer about the laws in your state.



### **Does the birth father have any legal rights?**

Laws about father's rights differ from state to state. His rights may depend on whether you are married to him, whether or not he has provided financial support, and other factors. Ask your adoption professional to explain your state's laws regarding paternal rights.

### **How will I feel after the adoption?**

This is a time of many feelings, some which will be very hard to get through by yourself. Not only will you be experiencing feelings related to the adoption process, but your body's hormone levels have also changed from giving birth. That is why it is important to have people around you who are very supportive of you.

It is also important to have an adoption counselor who can support you while you are trying to decide what to do and after you complete the adoption process. Because the feelings that follow an adoption can be very strong, it is important to have a counselor you know and trust to help you if you are having a hard time dealing with your feelings. Ask your adoption agency or adoption lawyer to help you locate counseling services in your area.