

Education on Parenting Options Including Adoption as an Consideration

Provide Viable Parenting Alternatives

The Center encourages clients to attend the LEAP (Life Education Assistance Program) to better understand the demands and joys of parenting. This series includes:

- Adjusting To Parenthood
- Feeding, Scheduling, Wake, and Sleep Patterns
- Hygiene (Bathing, Diapering, etc.)
- Illness and Safety
- Bonding, Affection and Communication
- Age Appropriate Discipline
- Coping and Discipline
- Individuality, Spiritual Growth and Prayer

There are also lessons to learn ways of improving their life skills and the quality of their lives. Once a person has opportunity to look at some of the responsibilities that go with parenting and evaluate the details of her personal situation, she is better equipped to evaluate her options. If they have concerns about the responsibilities involved with parenting, they may either need more time and counsel to become better prepared, or they may decide that single parenting may not be best for them and their baby. This is a time for them to consider other parenting options such as:

Parenting their baby while living with support person(s)

It is important for the mother of the baby to plan for the assistance needed and receive specific commitments from those who offer to help.

Shared parenting responsibilities with the baby's father or other family members

It is important for the mother of the baby to establish specific times and responsibilities for person.

Adoption as a loving parenting option

It is important for the mother of the baby to understand there are several types of adoption:

- A **Confidential Adoption** is one where the adoptive parents care for the baby with no contact between the birth parents and the baby. All court records are most often sealed.
- A **Semi-Open Adoption** is where the adoptive parents care for the baby, while giving the birth parents opportunity to stay in contact without full disclosure of identifying information.
- An **Open Adoption** is where the adoptive parents care for the baby, giving the birth parents the opportunity to maintain an on-going relationship with the child. The following are some of the ways an adoption agreement might be established:
 - The goal is to form a close and trusting relationship between the birthparents, adoptive parents, and baby.
 - The birth parents might choose to select the adoptive parents.
 - All expenses might be paid with an adoption, leaving birth parents free to continue their other goals.

Birth Mothers Considering Adoption Need the Facts

The Women's Pregnancy Center of Houston compiled a number of commonly asked questions and answers about the parenting option of adoption. A client considering her alternatives should be encouraged to understand these before she decides.

What is Adoption?

- Adoption is the loving act of biological parents (birth parents) who choose a family to nurture and care for their child.
- Adoption is a bond created through the love birth parents and adoptive parents share for their child.
- Adoption is not selfish or irresponsible; rather, it involves birth parents and adoptive parents working together to make a plan that is in the best interest of a child.
- Adoption is not foster care. Instead, adoption provides your child with parents who are better able to emotionally and financially support a child.

Will the adoptive parents take good care of my baby?

- You will have the security of knowing the parents you choose have proven their ability to provide an exceptional home for your child.

What can adoption offer me?

- In making an adoption plan for your baby, you may have:
 - The choice of adoptive family
 - A flexible plan which you control
 - Meeting(s) with the adoptive family
 - An exchange of information through the years
 - Assistance with pregnancy-related necessities
 - Access to an experienced legal department
 - Housing assistance
 - Excellent medical providers
 - Educational and career planning
 - Emotional support throughout your pregnancy and beyond

What can adoption offer my child?

- A mother and father
- The love and security of adoptive parents who are emotionally and financially ready to parent.
- The kind of home and family life that you want for your child.
- The opportunity to fulfill the dreams you have for your child – dreams that take time, money and commitment.

When I think of the baby I place for adoption, how might I feel?

- You'll feel a lot of things:
 - Love for your child
 - Sadness of saying goodbye
 - Peace that comes with knowing you made the right decision for you and your child.
- Though the grief felt when saying good-bye is very real, strength and comfort come through the knowledge that you have given your child a life of wonderful opportunities.

How do I know that I won't regret the decision of making an adoption plan for my baby?

- Making an adoption plan for your baby is a tough decision, probably the toughest decision you'll ever have to make.

- There are no guarantees that this plan, or any major life decision, will be without regrets. But what is most important is that you not lose sight of what's best for you and your baby, now and in the future.

Support is needed after the Parenting Option Choice is made

The birth mother should be supported in her choice of a parenting option. Being a parent is hard work, no matter what their situation, but it is also the most important job in the world.

If they are confident in parenting their child alone, they should receive encouragement.

If they choose shared options, they should be encouraged to succeed with the help of others.

If they decide to make an adoption plan, they should be reassured it is a loving option.

- The Care Net pamphlet "Before You Decide" gives a testimony of a mother who made the difficult decision to adopt. These are her words. *"Since I could not provide what we needed, the best decision I ever made was to find a loving adoptive family to raise my daughter. She loves her family and loves me too. I didn't give her up, I gave her more."*
Donna

If they feel overwhelmed after the birth of their child, they need to know about this law.

Baby Moses/Safe Haven Law in Texas

- They should talk to someone if they feel weighed down about being a parent.
- They need to know help is available and it is never too late.
- The "Baby Moses Safe Haven" law protects their baby and offers an alternative to parenting. If a baby under 60 days old is not hurt, the mother or father can leave the child in a safe place without fear of being charged with a crime. Safe places are hospitals, fire stations, emergency clinics or licensed child-placing agencies.