

## Are You Pregnant and Thinking About Adoption?

Are you pregnant and thinking about placing your baby for adoption? Being well-informed may help you feel better about whatever decision you make—whether it is to place your child for adoption or to parent your child yourself. This factsheet provides information about adoption, presents questions to consider, and points to resources that may help you in exploring your options. Others who are affected by adoption decisions, such as expectant fathers and other relatives, also may find this factsheet useful for answering their questions.

### Understanding Adoption

Adoption is a process—with legal, social, and emotional aspects—in which children who will not be raised by their birth parents become permanent legal members of another family. When it comes to adoption, there is no one right decision for everyone. Understanding adoption—including why others choose adoption or not and its long-term impact—may help you figure out what’s right for you and your child.

### WHAT'S INSIDE

Understanding adoption

Gathering information and exploring your options

Making the adoption decision: questions to ask yourself

Selecting an agency or independent adoption

Selecting adoptive parents

Staying in touch with your child after adoption

Taking care of yourself

Resources for more information

**Why do some expectant parents choose to place their baby for adoption?**

Everyone's situation is different, but many women (and their partners) choose adoption because they do not feel ready or able to raise a child. They often believe that the baby will have a better life in an adoptive home with parents who are ready to welcome and care for a child. As such, these mothers typically feel that they are putting their baby's best interests ahead of their own. Other factors that sometimes play a part in parents' decisions to place their children for adoption include money problems, personal goals, and family attitudes.

**Why do some expectant parents choose to raise their baby rather than place the baby for adoption?**

Women experiencing an unplanned pregnancy (and their partners) who consider adoption but decide to raise their child themselves may do so because they conclude that they have the commitment and support necessary to raise a child. They may feel that maintaining their connection with their child and preventing a profound loss for themselves and their child outweigh any possible advantages of adoption. Some birth parents who were unsure before their child's birth find they do feel ready to be a parent after they've held and connected with their baby.

**What is the impact of the adoption decision?** Adoption is more than a one-time legal event; adoption is a lifelong process with long-term impact for everyone involved (your child, you and your family members, the birth father and his relatives, and the adoptive family). Once an adoption is legally finalized, it is permanent, and it will change your relationship with your child forever. In the eyes of the law, your child is no longer related to you. The adoptive parents will raise your child and have full legal rights and responsibilities as the child's parents. While experiences differ, many birth parents who place their child for adoption experience feelings of loss, grief, and guilt. For some, it is a traumatic experience. These feelings may persist many years after the adoption and may negatively affect birth parents' later lives and relationships. (Read more at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt\\_people/impact.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt_people/impact.cfm))

- **Keep in mind:** While birth parents and children who have been adopted often struggle with identity issues and lifelong feelings of loss and grief, many will learn how to work through these emotions, often with the help of counseling.

**If I choose adoption, will I know what happens to my child?**

Placing a child for adoption does not mean necessarily that you won't have any future contact with your child. In past generations, many adoptions were surrounded in secrecy, and communication between birth parents and their children was discouraged. Today, most infant adoptions have some degree of openness in which birth parents have some contact with adoptive parents and their children who have been adopted. (Open adoption is discussed further on page 8.)

**When do I have to make my decision?** Most State laws require that the final decision to place a child for adoption be made after the baby is born.<sup>1</sup> Think of it as making the adoption decision twice—once while you are pregnant and again after giving birth. After consideration of your options, you may prepare for adoption by selecting a licensed adoption agency or adoption lawyer (see page 5) and selecting adoptive parents (or parent) (see page 7). Nevertheless, the final and legal decision is made by you (or you and the father) after the child's birth.

- **Keep in mind:** It's hard to know exactly how you'll feel after the birth of your baby. **You should not sign papers that make the adoption final until you are sure of your decision.** Until the final papers are signed, you have parental rights to make decisions regarding your child.

<sup>1</sup> For more information on your State's laws and required waiting periods, talk to an adoption lawyer or adoption agency representative. See also *Consent to Adoption* at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/statutes/consent.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/consent.cfm).

## Gathering Information and Exploring Your Options

Gathering information, consulting with others, and thoughtfully exploring all your options will help you make a fully informed decision. Reading this publication can get you started. Other sources of information and support are described below.

- **The Internet.** If you are just beginning to research your options, the Internet can be helpful. You can explore the Internet using search terms such as “unplanned pregnancy,” “adoption options,” “parenting,” and “adoption birth mother” (or “birth father”) to name a few. Try to visit trustworthy websites (see the resources listed at the end of this publication). You also may want to look at blogs and discussion forums that include first-person accounts and may provide insights into the adoption process and what others have experienced.
  - **Keep in mind:** *Information on the web can be biased or inaccurate. Try to look at several websites and blogs and note varied points of view as well as common themes. In addition, be aware that some dishonest online groups may try to take advantage of pregnant women at a vulnerable time.*
- **Books.** Like the Internet, books can let you find and digest information in private. To get a complete view of adoption, you may want to look at books that present different perspectives, including those of parents who placed their children for adoption, parents who adopted children, children and adults who were adopted, and parents raising children in specific situations (for example, single parents or teen parents).
- **Trusted friends and family members.** It can be helpful to talk through your feelings and options with a trusted family member or friend. Try to find someone who will listen and won’t pressure you into making a decision that doesn’t feel right.
  - **Keep in mind:** *While it’s good to talk things through with friends and family, ultimately, the decision is yours to make.<sup>2</sup>*
- **Counselors.** A trained counselor can help you to not only understand your options and their long-term implications, but also explore your feelings about those options. You can find professional counselors—including therapists and social workers—at public departments of social services, local health or mental health centers and hospitals, and adoption agencies. Counselors also may be religious leaders, including pastors, rabbis, or others associated with a place of worship. Your doctor, friends, or family members may be able to refer you to a professional counselor. Referral services also can be found through local United Way organizations. (Try calling 211 or visiting <http://211us.org/>.) No matter where you go, look for a counselor who is experienced in working with pregnant women and who treats you with sensitivity and respect.
  - **Keep in mind:** *It’s important to find a counselor who can answer your questions in an unbiased way and who doesn’t stand to gain from the decision you make. Some counselors may be predisposed toward one option (for example, due to professional affiliations), or they may have other people’s interests in mind (for example, prospective adoptive parents waiting to find an infant available for adoption). As such, some women prefer to find counselors that are not associated with an adoption agency or lawyer to lessen the likelihood of being pressured toward adoption.*
- **Adoption agencies and adoption lawyers.** If you are leaning toward adoption, talking with someone at a licensed adoption agency or with a lawyer who specializes in adoption may be helpful to learn more about the adoption process. (See below for more information on selecting agencies and adoption lawyers.)
  - **Keep in mind:** *Talking to an agency or lawyer does not mean that you’re promising to place your child for adoption but rather serves as another way to collect information. Do not sign any legal papers until you have made up your mind to develop an adoption plan.*

<sup>2</sup> In some States, a minor parent must have consent from his/her parents to place a child for adoption. See Information Gateway’s *Consent to Adoption* at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/statutes/consent.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/consent.cfm).

## Making the Adoption Decision: Questions to Ask Yourself

The decision to place a child for adoption is never easy. Like the decision to parent a child, it takes courage and love. Following are some questions that you may want to think about as you make your decision.

**Have I explored all my options?** While you may be leaning in one direction, it's important that you take time and explore all of your options. The options that "rise to the top" may vary depending on your circumstances and beliefs. Carefully assess the benefits and challenges of each option, as well as potential supports to address any challenges. Are you thinking about adoption only because you have current money problems or because your living situation is difficult? If so, there may be other answers. Have you asked friends and family if they can help? Have you looked into local programs or called Social Services to see what they can do? Social workers may be able to help you find a way to parent your baby by assisting with finding a place to live, child care, job training, or other supports. Alternatively, have you considered placing your child (formally or informally) with a family member? If you want more time to make your decision, have you asked an adoption agency whether there are any short-term options available (for example, temporary foster care)?

**Have I involved the baby's father in the decision-making process?** There are several reasons for involving the baby's father, not the least of which are fathers' rights and State laws about fathers' roles and responsibilities in adoption.<sup>3</sup> Most States require that the father (or the man you think is the father) be told about the baby before the adoption. This is true even if you aren't married to the father. While laws vary, your State's law may require that your baby's father (or your husband) sign legal papers agreeing to the adoption—granting legal "consent"—before you can place your child for adoption.<sup>4</sup> In some cases where agencies and lawyers have pushed through adoptions without getting the father's consent, the court has legally overturned the adoption. Note also that, in

<sup>3</sup> For more information, visit Fathers' Involvement in Adoption Planning at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/birth/for/father.cfm>.

<sup>4</sup> For more information, read *Consent to Adoption* at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/statutes/consent.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/consent.cfm).

some States, if parents are unmarried, the presumed father (or "putative" father) has a certain amount of time to put his name on the State's putative father registry or take other legal action to claim that he is the baby's father. If you don't know the father's name or whereabouts, some States require that a notice be published.<sup>5</sup>

- **Keep in mind:** Laws related to the father's role and responsibilities in adoption differ from State to State. To learn more about the laws in your State, visit <https://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/birth/for/legal.cfm> or ask an adoption lawyer or an adoption agency staff member to explain the legal requirements to you.

If you have a good relationship with your baby's father, you may be able to help each other with considering the options and making a decision. Some women considering adoption, however, do not have a good relationship with their child's father. For example, they may have had a violent relationship with the father.<sup>6</sup> In such circumstances, you can ask an adoption agency or attorney to contact the father rather than deal with him directly.

Regardless of your relationship with your child's father, it's also important to think about your child's future perspective. At some point, most children who have been adopted ask questions about their birth parents and the circumstances of their adoption. Many will want to develop a relationship with their birth father. An adopted person who finds out that his or her birth mother made the adoption decision without consulting the birth father may feel tremendous resentment toward the birth mother.

**Have I talked about this decision with my own family and the father's family?** Your family and/or the father's family may be a source of support as you consider what to do, even if the pregnancy has put a strain on your relationships. Besides emotional support, your families may be able to provide money, housing, and other kinds of help. In addition, if you are under 18 years of age, in some States your own parent(s) may also have to give permission for you to place your baby for adoption.

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see *The Rights of Unmarried Fathers* at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/statutes/putative.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/putative.cfm).

<sup>6</sup> For information on services for victims of domestic violence or sexual assault, see <https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/domviolence/resources/>.

If you decide to go ahead with adoption, there may be someone in your family or the father's family who would like to adopt your baby. Kinship adoption can help maintain the child's connections to his or her family members and cultural heritage. (For more information on kinship adoption, visit <https://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adoptive/kinship.cfm>.)

**How might I feel in 10 or 20 years if I place my child for adoption or I parent my child myself?** While it's impossible to know for sure how you will feel many years from now, you should consider the long-term effects of any decision you make. For instance, you may want to think about your future with and without this child. How would raising a child or placing a child for adoption affect what you want from life? What support systems may be needed to achieve your long-term plans under each of your options? How might you feel if you go on to have other children, or if you do not have any additional children?

- **Keep in mind:** *There are no "right" or "wrong" responses to these questions, and you may not know the answers right now.*

## Selecting an Agency or Independent Adoption

If you decide to make an adoption plan for your child, you can choose whether you want:

- An agency adoption
- An independent (or private) adoption handled by an adoption lawyer or by an adoption facilitator (in States where facilitators are allowed by law)

You may not know which type of adoption will work best for you and your baby until you have explored further. Each of these options is described below, along with considerations and resources for selecting qualified professionals.

## Agency Adoption

Adoption agencies are generally full-time organizations whose main work is adoption. They usually employ a staff and work with many families and pregnant women in order to find the best families for babies. Some women choose an agency adoption rather than an independent adoption because licensed agencies follow State adoption standards and often provide more services, such as counseling, before, during, and after the adoption.

If you choose to work with an agency, look for a licensed agency with a good reputation. You can find contact information for licensed domestic adoption agencies in your State from the National Foster Care and Adoption Directory (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/nfcad>). To find information on the reputation and licensing of an agency, follow the instructions provided in *How to Assess the Reputation of Licensed, Private Adoption Agencies* (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/twenty.cfm>).

Once you contact a licensed agency, you will generally work with an adoption counselor. During initial meetings, the adoption counselor typically will do the following:

- Provide you with information about your options for your baby
- Explain the processes for selecting adoptive parents and giving up your parental rights (also referred to as *relinquishment, surrender, and other terms*)
- Collect information about you and the baby's father to create a medical and social history for the baby<sup>7</sup>
- Work with you to develop an adoption plan, if you choose to have one

## A Private/Independent Adoption

Some birth parents choose to place their children for adoption without the involvement of an agency. Some women feel that this will provide them more control, or perhaps they already have identified a prospective family and want to proceed with the adoption. In an independent adoption (or private placement), a pregnant

<sup>7</sup> For more information, see *Collection of Family Information About Adopted Persons and Their Birth Families* at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/statutes/collection.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/collection.cfm).

## Sample Questions to Ask an Adoption Agency Representative or an Adoption Lawyer

If you are seriously considering adoption as an option, talk to several agencies or lawyers and ask as many questions as you need to feel comfortable.

- *What types of services do you offer, and what are the fees (if any)?*
- *Will I get counseling? During what time period? (before the birth? after placement?)*
- *How will you handle obtaining the consent of the baby's father?*
- *Will you help pay expenses for medical care, housing, counseling, legal fees, or other?*
- *If I change my mind about the adoption, will I have to pay for services already received? (Note: this is illegal in most States)*
- *How do you find and screen prospective adoptive parents?*
- *What role can I play in getting to know and selecting the family who will adopt my child?*
- *Can I receive ongoing information about my child or be able to have direct contact after placement (if I want that option)? What services do you provide to help us stay in touch?*
- *How would you handle the situation if my baby were born with a disability?*
- *Can you provide me with references (names and contact information) of clients whose children you placed for adoption and who have agreed to talk with women considering adoption?*

woman generally works just with a lawyer and the family that she selects to adopt her child.

In an independent adoption, the prospective adoptive parents often pay for the expectant mother's medical costs, legal fees, temporary housing expenses, and possibly other expenses. To help prevent "baby selling," there are strict laws in each State about what prospective parents can and cannot pay for.<sup>8</sup>

**Independent adoption with a qualified lawyer.** If you choose to work with a lawyer, be sure that the lawyer has experience with adoption, is licensed to practice law in your State, and is in good standing with the State Bar Association. You can find names and contact information for adoption attorneys on the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys Membership Directory ([http://www.adoptionattorneys.org/aaa\\_directory](http://www.adoptionattorneys.org/aaa_directory)). Additional legal referral resources can be found for each State through the American Bar Association's Legal Help website (<http://apps.americanbar.org/legalservices/findlegalhelp/home.cfm>). This website also can provide information on whether a person is licensed to practice law in your State (select your State and click on Lawyer Licensing).

When selecting a lawyer, find out about the lawyer's qualifications, experience with adoption, services, fees, and processes. Look for a lawyer who won't charge you a fee if you decide not to place your baby for adoption.

- **Keep in mind.** *You should plan to have your own lawyer represent you and your baby, and the adoptive parents should have a different lawyer representing them. It's important that your lawyer is looking out for your interests, especially if you change your mind about adoption.*

**Adoption facilitators.** Some States permit adoption facilitators (a person or organization) to bring together expectant mothers (and their partners) and families seeking to adopt. While in some States, facilitators can be anyone at all, in others they need to be licensed or regulated. And in some States, they are completely

<sup>8</sup> For more information, see *Regulation of Private Domestic Adoption Expenses* at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/statutes/expenses.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/expenses.cfm).

illegal.<sup>9</sup> State laws regulate or limit the use of adoption facilitators in order to reduce opportunities for individuals to make money from “selling” children.

- **Keep in mind:** *Before you work with anyone to arrange an adoption, find out more about the laws in your State. Be cautious of people who may want to take advantage of your situation.*

## Selecting Adoptive Parents

Whether you place your child through an agency or through an independent adoption, you will probably have a great deal of choice in selecting the parents for your child. Spend some time thinking about what type of family and home you would prefer for your child. For example, are you looking for parents who share your values and beliefs? Is it important to you that your child be raised by two parents or with other siblings? Do you want a family that feels the same way you do about staying in touch after the adoption?<sup>10</sup>

In an agency adoption, families interested in adopting will apply to the agency. You may have the opportunity to look through profiles, letters, pictures, and/or videos to select potential parents for your child. If you want, many agencies will arrange for you to meet prospective adoptive families before you make a decision on which family feels right.

In an independent adoption, there are many ways that expectant mothers find potential adoptive parents. Sometimes they become aware of families interested in adoption through a lawyer, doctor, family members, a friend, or their faith community. Some people who want to adopt develop profiles that appear on websites and social media forums like Facebook or run ads in local newspapers. This type of advertising is restricted or illegal in some States but is very popular in other places.<sup>11</sup> Once you make contact with a potential adoptive family, an adoption lawyer can help you follow up.

<sup>9</sup> For more information, see *Use of Advertising and Facilitators in Adoptive Placements* at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/statutes/advertising.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/advertising.cfm).

<sup>10</sup> For a list of sample questions to ask prospective parents, see the American Pregnancy Association website at <http://americanpregnancy.org/adoption/guidelineschoosingfamily.html>.

<sup>11</sup> For more information, read *Use of Advertising and Facilitators in Adoptive Placements* at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/statutes/advertising.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/advertising.cfm).

## Legal Considerations in Some Cases

As noted throughout this publication, you should be aware of the various State laws that govern adoption processes (see <https://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/birth/for/legal.cfm>). In addition to State laws, there are special Federal laws that relate to adoption and race/ethnicity:

- **Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA).** MEPA prohibits publically funded agencies from delaying or denying the placement of a child due to the race, color, or national origin of either the child or the adoptive family. Regardless of the expectant parents’ wishes, an adoption agency may not be able to wait until a family from a requested ethnic group is available.
- **Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).** ICWA states that if an American Indian or Alaskan Native baby is placed for adoption, the child’s extended family must be given the chance to adopt the baby. If they choose not to adopt, members of the child’s Tribe, followed by members of other Indian Tribes, must be offered the chance for adoption. This law gives the Tribal court the right to make adoption decisions. If you or the baby’s father has any American Indian or Alaskan Native heritage, talk with an adoption lawyer to see how this law might apply.

- **Keep in mind:** *While the Internet and social media make finding information about prospective adoptive parents quicker and easier, they also can create opportunities for pressure, fraud, and exploitation. If you use the Internet to find potential adoptive parents, be sure to ask lots of questions to assess whether the service providers are ethical and the services are in your and your child’s best interest.*

In both agency adoptions and private/independent adoptions, prospective adoptive families must complete a home study process. The purpose of the home study is to ensure that the adoptive home is safe and appropriate for the child. A home study typically includes interviews with prospective parents, visits to the home, and background and criminal record checks.<sup>12</sup> Talk with your counselor or lawyer about getting a copy of a potential adoptive family's profile and/or home study.

## Staying in Touch With Your Child After Adoption

Today, most domestic infant adoptions involve some level of "openness." Open adoption allows birth parents to know and have contact with the adoptive parents and possibly the child who has been adopted. After the adoption, the birth mother (and possibly the birth father and other family members) and the adoptive family can communicate in various ways—letters, phone calls, social media, emails, texts, video calls, and/or visits. In some cases, the adoption agency may serve as an intermediary to pass information between birth families and adoptive families. The type and frequency of communication will depend on the choices and needs of the people involved and often changes over time.<sup>13</sup>

Research points to many benefits of openness for children who have been adopted and their birth mothers. Through direct contact with birth family members, openness can help your child learn more about his or her personal history, family background, medical information, and the reasons for placement. As a result, your child can benefit from a stronger sense of identity, self-worth, and connection. In addition, birth mothers often report a greater sense of control in an open adoption and comfort from knowing that their child is healthy and cared for.

<sup>12</sup> For more information, read *The Adoption Home Study Process* at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f\\_homstu.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_homstu.cfm).

<sup>13</sup> For more information about open adoption, see *Open Adoption: Could Open Adoption be the Best Choice for You and Your Baby* at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/openadoption.cfm> and *Openness in Adoption: Building Relationships Between Adoptive and Birth Families* at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f\\_openadopt.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_openadopt.cfm).

Many birth mothers in open adoptions also have been shown to adjust better after the adoption.<sup>14</sup>

Some birth parents feel that they would prefer not to have contact with their child after the adoption and may arrange for a "closed" adoption. In closed adoptions, the birth parents and the adoptive parents do not know each other, although the adoptive parents may receive some nonidentifying information about the birth parents (such as a medical history). These types of adoptions are becoming less common as the benefits of openness are increasingly recognized. In addition, as social media make it easier for people who have been adopted and birth family members to find each other, it is becoming harder to keep an adoption closed.

If you decide to make an adoption plan, talk to your adoption counselor or adoption lawyer about how much contact you are interested in having with your child's adoptive parents and your child. You and the prospective adoptive parents should work out in advance how you will keep in touch, how often, who will be involved, and how you will go about changing the arrangements if desired in the future. Sometimes these arrangements will be formalized into a written postadoption contact agreement.<sup>15</sup>

- **Keep in mind:** *Postadoption agreements can be useful tools in setting common expectations and should be filed before the adoption is finalized. However, such agreements may not be enforceable by law if the adoptive or birth parents change their minds and decide to drop communication.*

<sup>14</sup> For a summary of openness research see *Openness in Adoption: From Secrecy and Stigma to Knowledge and Connections* on the Donaldson Adoption Institute website at <http://adoptioninstitute.org/publications/openness-in-adoption-from-secrecy-and-stigma-to-knowledge-and-connections/>.

<sup>15</sup> For more information, see *Postadoption Contact Agreements Between Birth and Adoptive Families* at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/statutes/cooperative.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/cooperative.cfm).

## Safe Havens

Many States have safe haven laws that allow mothers to leave their newborn babies at certain places—such as hospitals, police stations, or fire stations. Leaving a baby where someone can keep the child safe until a permanent home is found is a better choice than abandoning a baby in unsafe circumstances; however, there are several disadvantages to not working directly with an adoption professional. The child may grow up with little or no information about his or her family or medical history and will be unlikely to reunite with a birth parent later, if desired. Birth mothers who leave their babies at safe havens may have fewer opportunities for counseling. For more information, see *Infant Safe Haven Laws* at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/statutes/safehaven.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/safehaven.cfm).

## Taking Care of Yourself

During and after an unplanned or crisis pregnancy, you may feel anxious, stressed, overwhelmed, and many other emotions. Be sure to get proper health care for your baby and you. Counseling during your pregnancy—particularly with a neutral, trained professional—may help you cope with your emotions and empower you to make sound decisions for yourself and for the baby. Counseling after the birth can help you learn to live with whatever decisions you make. Some licensed adoption agencies will provide counseling services after the adoption for as long as you need it. In independent adoptions, most States allow, and some States require, adoptive parents to pay for the birth mother’s counseling (with various time limits).<sup>16</sup>

Grief and loss are common reactions for birth parents after they place their child for adoption. Some birth parents also go through phases of feeling guilty and

<sup>16</sup> For more information, see *Regulation of Private Domestic Adoption Expenses* at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/statutes/expenses.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/expenses.cfm).

angry.<sup>17</sup> Strong feelings of grief and regret may occur many years after the adoption takes place. It’s important to admit these feelings to yourself and to know that they are normal. Years after the adoption, you or your child may try to contact one another. The search and reunion process can be an intense emotional experience, which may benefit from professional support.<sup>18</sup>

Whatever level of ongoing contact you have with your child, counseling can be helpful. One-to-one counseling and/or support groups with other birth mothers may help you accept your adoption arrangements, resolve your grief, feel good about yourself, and plan for your future. Moving forward does not mean that you will ever forget your baby, but just that you are ready to accept and integrate the adoption as part of your life.

## Resources for More Information

### Websites and Blogs

Child Welfare Information Gateway

- For Expectant Parents Considering Adoption and Birth Parents  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/birth/for>
- Glossary of Adoption and Child Welfare Terms  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/admin/glossary/index.cfm>
- Laws Related to Adoption  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/laws/>
- National Foster Care & Adoption Directory Search  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/nfcad/>

Adoption Together Birthparents Blog

<http://www.birthparentblog.com/>

America Adopts

<http://www.americaadopts.com/pregnant/>

American Adoption Congress

<http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org>

American Pregnancy Association

<http://americanpregnancy.org/adoption/adoptionfaq.html>

<sup>17</sup> For more information, see *Impact of Adoption on Birth Parents* at [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f\\_impact/index.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_impact/index.cfm).

<sup>18</sup> For more information about search and reunion, visit <https://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/search/>.

Concerned United Birthparents (CUB)  
<http://www.cubirthparents.org>

Insight: Open Adoption Resources and Support  
<http://openadoptioninsight.org/expectant-parents/>

National Council for Adoption, IChooseAdoption.org  
<http://ichooseadoption.org/>

Open Adoption Bloggers  
<http://openadoptionbloggers.com>

## Publications

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013). *Impact of adoption on birth parents*. Available from: [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f\\_impact/index.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_impact/index.cfm)

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