



How Can I Make An Adoption Plan for My Unborn Child?

Adoption: A Loving Option

By: Renee Hettich, MA, LMSW

Are you experiencing an unexpected pregnancy? If so, you may be feeling anxious, confused, indecisive, and overwhelmed. You want what is best for you and your child but you may be unsure what to do.

Should I parent the child or make an adoption plan for the child with an adoptive family? The decisions are yours to make. Your choices will be influenced by your personal beliefs, your age, your relationship to the father of the child, your social situation, your support from family and friends, your future goals and aspirations, and other personal interests.

So how do I sort through my jumble of emotions, the intricacy of my situation, and the complexity of my options? Reaching out to family and friends for support and guidance will help. Seeking counsel and assistance from a social worker with expertise in the field of parenting and adoption will be vital. A professional social worker can help you explore your feelings surrounding your pregnancy and plan for your child. The social worker can help you secure resources you may need to help you make your decision regarding parenting or adoption. The social worker can help you explore your parenting or adoption options. The social worker will support you as you make positive and loving choices for

you and your child. Qualified social workers can be found at counseling centers, community clinics, and adoption agencies. Please understand that you have the right to make your own decisions regarding the parenting or adoption of your child. No one should influence or coerce your decision-making – not your parents, siblings, friends, social worker, attorney, doctor, counselor, etc. Social workers at Family Connections, Inc., a not-for-profit, authorized adoption agency, are available to assist you and will support and respect your choices.

If I decide to make an adoption plan for my child, what are my options? You are in the “driver’s seat” and will make the decisions regarding your plan to place your child with an adoptive family. You have many adoption options and can design your own adoption plan. Family Connections, Inc. can help you choose an adoption plan that is right for you and your child. You may choose a confidential adoption, where your identity and that of the adoptive parents is held in confidence. The adoptive family will not know you and you will not meet the adoptive parents. Or you may choose an open adoption, where you may choose to have contact with your child’s adoptive parents. The degree of openness with the adoptive family would depend upon your choices. For example you may wish to meet two or three families before you chose a family for your child. You may or may not wish to have contact with the adoptive family prior to the child’s birth. You may wish to receive pictures and letters from your child’s adoptive parents as the child grows. You may wish to have limited on-going visitation with the adoptive family. The possibilities are many and the choices are yours.

If I wish to make an adoption plan for my child, what do I do now? There are a number of steps you will take in planning for you and your child.

- Your first step is to consult with a qualified adoption agency like Family Connections, Inc. The agency will assist you as you design and implement your adoption plan.
- Second, you will speak with an attorney who will explain your legal rights and answer your questions. An adoption agency can refer you to an attorney who is specialized in adoption.
- Next, you will consider qualified adoptive parents. The agency will provide you with profiles of adoptive families; profiles are booklets and/or web pages and/or videos that feature information about and pictures of the family. All adoptive parents are fully investigated and approved as qualified adoptive parents by an adoption agency or by Family Court. You may choose a family from these profiles or you may wish to meet with two or three of the families over lunch to get to know them better before making your decision. You will then decide which adoptive family you wish to make an adoption plan with.
- Now that you have identified a family for your child, the adoption agency will support you as you continue in your pregnancy and adoption planning. If you choose to build a relationship with the adoptive family prior to the child's birth, the agency will help you work out additional contact with the adoptive family.
- When the baby arrives, you will make your decision regarding the adoptive placement of your child. Up until the child's birth, your adoption plan is just that a plan. Once the baby is born, you decide whether or not to surrender the custody of your child to the adoption agency for placement with the adoptive family you have chosen.
- After you place your child for adoption, your plan for post adoption contact (if any) will be honored.

What about ... I have other questions? You must have a zillion questions running through your mind. Hopefully we can answer a few ...

- Will my child know that I made a loving choice? Yes! Adoptive parents have tremendous respect and admiration for you and your decision to entrust your child (a precious gift) to them. They will honor you and speak of you with great reverence and love to their child.
- Will my privacy be respected? Yes. Your privacy will be ensured. Confidentiality is maintained at all times.
- Will the adoption cost me anything? No. You will have no costs. All expenses are supported by the adoption agency and adoptive parents. If you need resources to support your pregnancy and adoption plan, the adoption agency will help you secure the needed resources (e.g. maternity cloths, housing, food, transportation, medical services).
- Will I receive counseling services? Yes, if you choose. Family Connections, Inc. provides adoption options counseling and offers private therapeutic counseling services to you prior to and after the adoption.
- Will my right to post adoption contact be protected? Yes, if you wish for post adoption contact with the adoptive family (e.g. exchange of pictures and letter, annual visitation with child). You and the adoptive family will sign a legal document

that obligates the family to comply. This agreement is enforceable by the court only if you place your baby using agency services.

Facing an unplanned pregnancy and making decisions regarding the care and parenting of your child is challenging. Family Connections, Inc. can help you make positive choices for you and your unborn baby. Please learn more about the agency at www.adoptfamilyconnections.org. We look forward to supporting you as you make loving decisions regarding the care of your baby. Please call us at 1-800-535-5556 or (607) 756-6574 or e-mail us at info@adoptfamilyconnections.org for assistance. Every call and e-mail is confidential!

Renee Hettich, MA, LMSW, is the mother of three children who were adopted. She will be forever grateful to her child's birth parents for entrusting her with their upbringing. She is an adoption social worker with Family Connections, Inc. and a speaker on adoption ethics and transracial parenting.

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