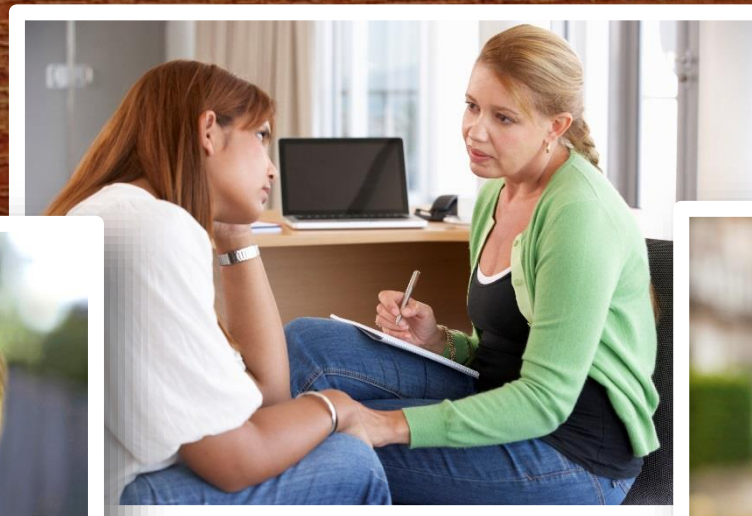
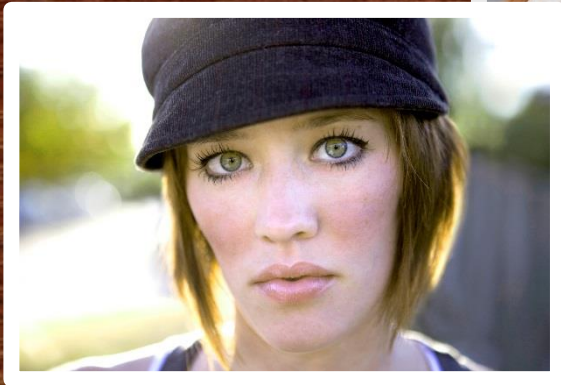


# Empowering Expectant Parents: Pregnancy Options Counseling and Open Adoption as an Alternative to State Adoption



*Prepared by:  
Shari Levine, MA*

  
Open Adoption & Family Services  
*Creating Lifelong Connections*

# Meet Shari Levine, MA

- Executive Director of OA&FS
- With the agency for 23 years
- Adoptive mom
- Have close relationships with childrens' birthparents
- Children's rights advocate



# About Open Adoption & Family Services



Open Adoption  
& Family Services

- Non-profit agency founded in 1985
- Licensed in Oregon and Washington
- Pro-choice with a reproductive justice lens
- Not religiously affiliated
- We welcome diversity

# Objectives



- Receive tools and resources to assist women in their decision-making process as they explore their pregnancy options.
- Learn about the open adoption as an alternative to state adoption.
- You'll receive a pdf of this webinar afterwards that contains live links to the videos, hand outs, and websites.
- [Download handouts here.](#)

# Bill of Rights in an Unintended Pregnancy

- Have access to information about all of your options.
- Freely explore your options without pressure or judgment.
- Receive respect, compassion and acceptance.
- Receive unbiased, non-directive pregnancy options counseling from qualified counselors.
- Have your choice honored, regardless of what it is.

# Who Seeks Options Counseling?

- 54% of pregnancies in the US are unintended
- Approximately 60% of these women choose to continue their pregnancy, 40% will choose to have an abortion
- Approximately 1% of women facing unintended pregnancy will choose adoption
- 75% of women who place children for adoption each year are between 20 and 45 years of age, while 25% are teens.

# Who Seeks Options Counseling?

- Of women who have had abortions: 61% already have at least one child; 58% are in their 20's; 56% are unmarried; 73% report a religious affiliation
- By age 45, more than half of American women will have an unintended pregnancy, and three in 10 will have had an abortion.
- Guttmacher Institute statistics on unintended pregnancy

# Values Exploration on a Personal and Professional Level

- What are your values regarding pregnancy options (parenting, abortion and adoption)?
- Do you have personal experience with these choices?
- What were you raised to believe? Do you feel differently now?



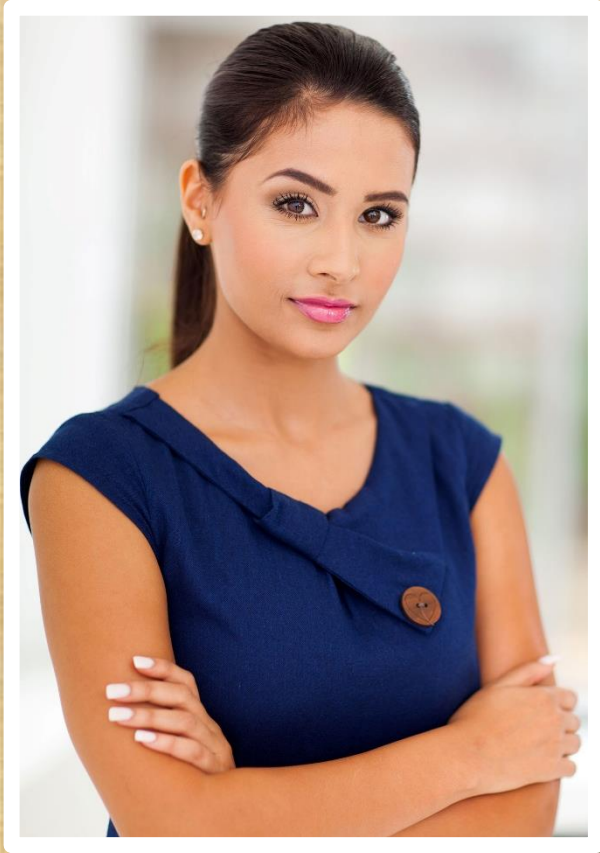


# Values Exploration on a Personal and Professional Level

- How do you think your personal values and beliefs may (consciously or unconsciously) influence your work with clients?
- What can you do to continue exploring your own values and beliefs?



# Exploring All Pregnancy Options



- Making an informed decision
- Avoiding assumptions
- The power of language in framing the conversation
- Creating an emotionally safe place
- Importance of feeling understood, cared for, empowered, informed, and not judged
- Letting go of any investment in her decision

# All Options Pregnancy Counseling: An Empowerment Model

## Outline for Options Counseling

**Beginning the Session:** My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a \_\_\_\_\_ (title) \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (agency name) \_\_\_\_\_. I'm here to create a safe, non-judgmental space for you to explore all of your pregnancy options. Everything we talk about will be confidential, however, if you share that you are harming yourself or another, I will need to report that to ensure you and those around you are safe. We will have \_\_\_\_\_ (length of time) \_\_\_\_\_ together today. As we begin, I want to remind you that you do not need to make a decision today. This is a very personal choice and there aren't any right or wrong answers. By exploring each choice thoroughly, you will gain clarity about what choice feels best to you.

### Questions (select questions you feel are most appropriate for the circumstances):

- How did you feel when you first found out you were pregnant?
- What do you see as your pregnancy options?
- Before you were pregnant, what were your impressions of adoption/abortion/parenting based on your values, cultural and religious beliefs?
- What additional information would you like to have about adoption/abortion/parenting?
- What are the pros and cons of choosing adoption/abortion/parenting?
- How might you feel after making this decision?
- How do you envision integrating this decision into your identity?
- Is there anyone you can talk to about the decision you are trying to make?
- What are the expectations of your family and community?
- What does it feel like to not be totally sure what the best option is for you?
- Is there a specific time each day that you can set aside to journal, talk to someone, or think about each of your options?
- What is your relationship like with the father? Will he be involved? If so, in what ways?
- What do you hope your life looks like in five years?

### Specific Questions Related to Each Option

- **Adoption:** Do you know what open adoption is? What qualities would you be seeking in an adoptive family? What would you want your relationship with them to look like?
- **Abortion:** Do you have information about the types of abortion, including the procedures and costs?
- **Parenting:** What resources do you envision needing after making this choice (including financial, housing, baby items, childcare)?

### Questions you would like to Add:

- Outline for Options Counseling

# All Options Pregnancy Counseling: An Empowerment Model

- How did you feel when you found out you were pregnant?
- What do you see as your pregnancy options?
- Knowledge and feelings of each pregnancy option?



# All Options Pregnancy Counseling: An Empowerment Model

## Tools for Your Agency: Providing Information on All Pregnancy Options (This handout intended for service providers)

Take time to explore how the following elements affect expectant parents' decision about the pregnancy:

- Knowledge and feelings of each pregnancy outcome
- Values, including personal, religious, spiritual, and cultural
- Expectations from family and community
- Goals and future planning (high school, college, vocational programs, and career planning)
- Financial situation and access to resources
- Who is in their support system, and what support do they offer (realistically)
- Past experiences with pregnancies, parenting or adoption, either personally or among close family and friends
- Gestational age of pregnancy
- Relationship with the birth father/current partner(s)
- Explore prenatal care, access to insurance
- Access to housing, employment

When addressing the option(s) that they are not willing to consider:

- What do they know about this option?
- Is there anything more would they like to learn about this option before ruling it out?
- Assure them that you need not discuss this option further at this time, but that they can always come back to it as needed

When addressing the option(s) that they are ambivalent about:

- What additional information would they like about this option?
- What would be the pros and cons of choosing this option?

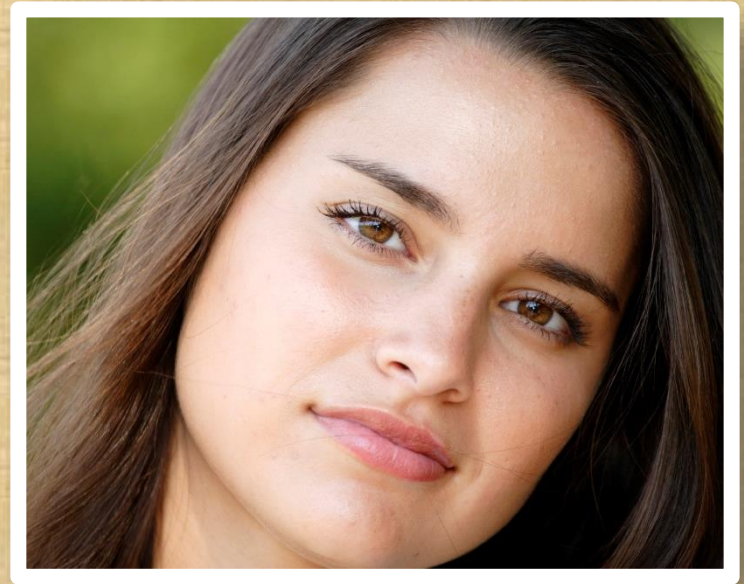
1-800-772-1115 Para Español 1-800-985-6763 www.openadopc.org



- Tools for Your Agency

# All Options Pregnancy Counseling: An Empowerment Model

- Values, including personal, religious, spiritual, and cultural
- Expectations from family and community
- Goals and future planning



# All Options Pregnancy Counseling: An Empowerment Model

- Financial situation and access to resources.
- Who is in their support system, and what support can they offer?
- Past experiences with pregnancies, parenting abortion or adoption.
- Relationship with the birth father/current partner(s).
- Explore prenatal care, access to insurance.

# All Options Pregnancy Counseling: An Empowerment Model

- Questions to Consider Flier

Your options: parenting, abortion or adoption.

Questions to consider:

- Before you were pregnant, what were your impressions of each option based on your values/cultural/religious/spiritual beliefs?
- What additional information would you like to have in exploring these choices?
- How will your choice change your current lifestyle and the goals or plans you had for yourself?
- What challenges do you expect? (e.g. financial needs, emotional needs, and personal goals...)
- How might you meet these challenges?
- Explore and list community resources available to help you meet your needs for each option.
- What is your relationship like with the father? Will he be involved? If so, in what ways?
- How might you feel after making this decision?
- What emotional support will you have?
- What are the expectations of your family and community?
- What do you hope your life looks like in five years?
- After talking to your friends and family, list the types of support they can realistically provide if you choose parenting.
- Do you have information about the types of abortion, including the procedures and costs?
- Do you know what open adoption is? What qualities would you be seeking in an adoptive family? What would you want your relationship with them to look like?

This is a very personal decision. There are no right or wrong answers. It may be helpful to create your own individual list of the pros and cons of parenting, abortion and adoption.

**Pregnant?** Text "open" to 971-266-0924 or call 1-800-772-1115 any time.  
(Text messaging available 9 am-5 pm PST M-F)

info@openadoption.org | Fax (503) 1-800-965-5713 | www.openadoption.org

Open Adoption & Family Services  
Creating Lifelong Connections



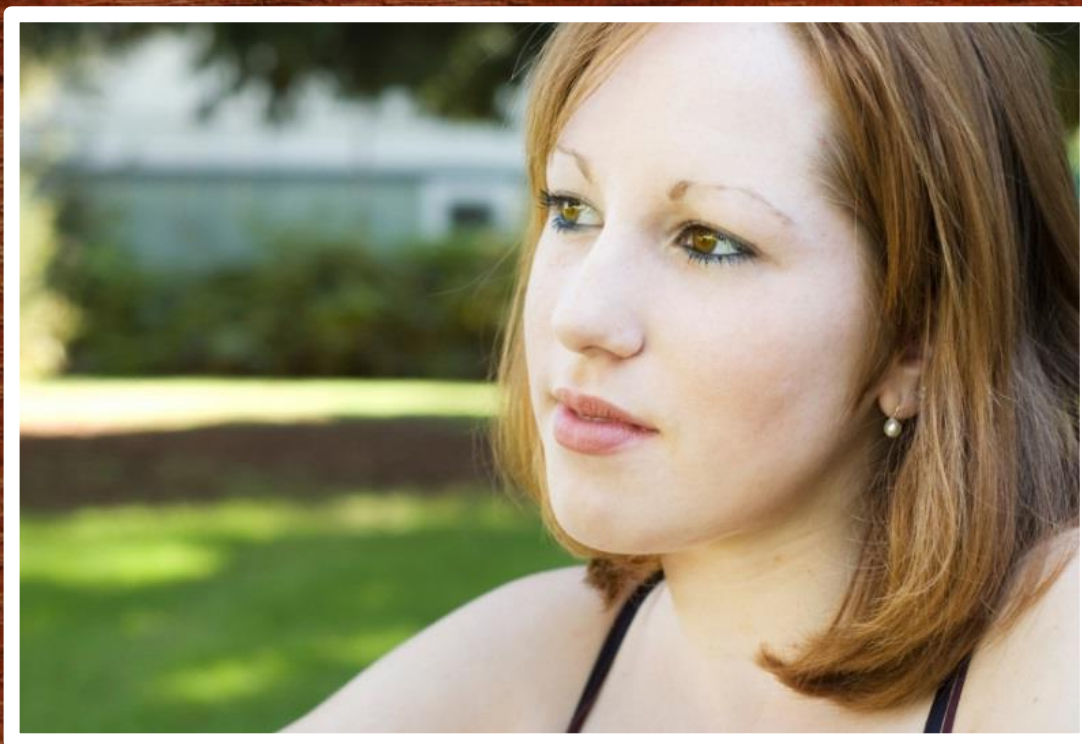


# Cultural Competency



- Cultural diversity, including cultural attitudes, family structures, religious beliefs, and language needs.
- Access to materials in their native language and to bilingual counselors and/or interpreters.

# Abortion



# Planned Parenthood Overview

- Includes FAQs with detailed information regarding each type of abortion.

Frequently Asked Questions	Abortion Pill Medication Abortion	In-Clinic Abortion Aspiration Abortion
How far along in the pregnancy can I be?	Up to 9 weeks into the pregnancy.	Up to 14 weeks into the pregnancy.
How long does it take?	The time in the health center is about 1 hour.	The time in the health center is about 3 hours.
What will happen?	<p>The actual abortion usually takes place at home. In the office, you will swallow the abortion pill (mifepristone).</p> <p>At home (most commonly), you take the misoprostol pills 24 to 48 hours later.</p> <p>The abortion usually starts 1 to 4 hours after you take the misoprostol. You will probably have heavy bleeding and cramps for a couple of hours. The process is usually complete within 24 hours, but can take up to several days.</p> <p>You will come back to the office about 1 week later.</p>	<p>The abortion takes place in the office.</p> <p>You will receive medication to help you manage the procedure.</p> <p>The actual abortion procedure takes about 5 minutes.</p> <p>The provider will use gentle suction to remove the pregnancy.</p> <p>You will have cramps for several minutes during this time.</p> <p>You will be in the recovery area with nursing care for 20 to 30 minutes.</p>
What professionals are involved?	Medication is administered by a clinician or physician.	An Advanced Practice Clinician or Physician performs the procedure.
How painful is it?	<p>Women have mild to very strong cramps on and off.</p> <p>Pain pills can help.</p> <p>Each woman is different in how she experiences pain.</p>	<p>Women have mild to very strong cramps on and off.</p> <p>*medications are available*</p> <p>Each woman is different in how she experiences pain.</p>
How much will I bleed?	<p>Heavy bleeding is common during the abortion. Clots up to the size of a lemon may be passed.</p> <p>After that, lighter bleeding lasts 1-2 weeks.</p>	<p>Some women will have little to no bleeding.</p> <p>Bleeding may continue off and on for a few weeks.</p>
How much does it cost?	Cost for the abortion pill is \$550.00 OHP/DSHS and private insurance may cover some of the cost.	Cost for the In-Clinic abortion varies depending on how far the pregnancy is. Less than 12 weeks = \$550.00 More than 12 weeks = \$650.00 IV Sedation = \$75.00
Can the abortion fail? What if it does?	Medication abortion works 97-99% of the time. If it fails, you can take another pill or have an in-clinic (aspiration) abortion.	It works 99% of the time. If it fails, you must have a repeat in-clinic (aspiration) abortion.
Can I still have children afterwards?	A safe, legal abortion does not change your baseline fertility (your chance of getting pregnant based on your own body).	A safe, legal abortion does not change your baseline fertility (your chance of getting pregnant based on your own body).

# Abortion Pill/Medication Abortion

- Up to 9 weeks of pregnancy
- It's 97-99% effective
- The abortion pill has been used safely for over 10 years.
- [Get details online](#)



# Surgical/In-clinic Abortion

- 99% effective, the procedure can take as little as five minutes for an early pregnancy and up to three days for a later term abortion.
- Detailed information from Planned Parenthood



# Costs



- Approximately \$550 for the abortion pill and up to \$650 for a surgical abortion
- Oregon Health Plan (in OR) and Medicaid (in WA) cover abortion in full
- Planned Parenthood offers financial assistance: 1-888-875-7820
- National Abortion Federation Hotline can also connect women with financial assistance: 1-800-772-9100

# Difficult Questions/Statements

- What would you do if you were in my place?
- I feel like having an abortion would be really selfish.
- My mom/dad is going to kill me.



# Difficult Questions/Statements

## Difficult Questions or Statements

Here is a list of some questions or comments that women might say during a session. While there is no one right way to respond, this handout offers suggestions for these situations.

### *What would you do if you were in my place?*

- I'm not sure what I would do. One of the hardest parts of an unplanned pregnancy is that there is no right decision.
- Even if two people are in exactly the same situation, their choices might be different.

### *Have you ever had an abortion?*

- Lots of women have abortions. Many statistics show that about half of all women will have an abortion during their lifetime.
- I may have or I may not have. But if I have, doesn't mean that you should; and if I haven't, doesn't mean that you shouldn't.
- How do you think that this would make a difference in your making a decision?

### *I feel like having an abortion would be really selfish.*

- What do you mean when you say selfish?  
This question often reveals another issue that is more concrete: i.e. "Because my boyfriend wants to keep it" or "I'm not done being young and having fun."

### *I was raised to believe that abortion is wrong.*

- A lot of people believe that abortion isn't the right choice for them.
- Sometimes people are raised to believe one thing and then when they grow up, they develop different opinions.
- Is this for religious reasons? Many Christians / Catholics are Pro-Choice. Have you ever heard of Catholics for a Free Choice?

### *I need an abortion because I went out drinking before I knew I was pregnant.*

- It doesn't seem like having a few drinks would necessarily mean there would be birth defects. Would you like to talk to someone to find out your risk?

### *My mom / dad is going to kill me.*

- Have your parents ever seriously threatened you or harmed you in the past?
- Many young people think that their parents won't understand, but very often families are brought closer by sharing difficult experiences.
- Do you have any other adults in your life that you can talk to?

### *I don't believe in abortion, but I feel like I have to do this.*

- If you don't feel comfortable about having an abortion, then maybe it's not the best choice for you. When people make a decision "because they have to," it can lead to a great deal of regret and grief.

5

- Difficult Questions Flier



# Abortion Services and Support

## Portland Clinics:

- Planned Parenthood
- Lovejoy Surgicenter
- Downtown Women's Center
- OHSU Center for Women's Health
- Backline Abortion Resources



# Options Counseling Services



- Open Adoption and Family Services Options Counseling
- Backline Toll Free Talk Line  
1-888-493-0092
- Pregnancy Options Workbook

# Parenting



# When the Choice is Parenting

- Counselors connect clients to resources. [211info.org](http://211info.org) has a comprehensive list:
  - Healthy Families, Oregon  
Mother's Care, Nurse  
Family Partnership, Early  
Head Start
  - Housing assistance
  - Public assistance
  - Parenting support  
organizations



# Options Counseling Resources

## Options Counseling Resources Page

### Options Counseling

- <http://www.pregnancyoptions.info/pregnant.htm>
- <http://www.openadopt.org/>

### Abortion

- [Planned Parenthood](#). The nation's leading sexual and reproductive health care provider and advocate.
- [Guttmacher Institute](#). Sexual and reproductive health research, policy analysis and public education.
- [Ibis Reproductive Health](#). Information resources for sexual and reproductive rights and health.
- [Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health \(ANSIRH\)](#). Reproductive health care and policy.
- [Pregnancy Options Info](#). Guides and workbooks that provide information on pregnancy options.
- [Backline](#). Free confidential talk line for women to discuss their feelings about pregnancy options without judgment.

### Parenting

- [211info](#). Comprehensive list of resources.
- [US Government Parenting Resources](#). An index of links and information on parenting compiled by the US Government. Includes WIC, food stamps, TANF, breastfeeding, Healthy Birth Initiative, Healthy Start, Head Start, childcare credit.
- [Zero to Three](#). Informs, trains and supports professionals, policymakers and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers.
- [Healthy Families America](#). Strives to provide all expectant and new parents with the opportunity to receive the education and support they need at the time their baby is born.
- [Parenting Now](#). Parenting groups, support, advice and networking.
- [Insights Teen Parenting Program](#). Provides positive options for young parents.
- [Oregon Parenting Education Directory](#). Programs listed by county compiled by Oregon State University.
- [Parent Helpline](#). Emotional support from trained advocates to become an empowered and stronger parent.
- [The Push Back](#). Pushing back against ignorance, bitterness and prejudice to show what young parenthood really looks like.
- [Squires](#). Group for teen fathers.
- [Children's Relief Nursery](#). Parent-infant attachment group for 0-12 months and 12-18 months.

### Adoption

- [Open Adoption and Family Services](#). Providing women and couples with a safe, non-judgmental place to explore all their pregnancy options. For those who choose to plan an adoption, they are supported and empowered as they build an open adoption relationship with their child's adoptive family.
- [Birth Mom Buds](#). Peer counseling, support, encouragement and friendship for pregnant women considering adoption or who have already placed children.

## • Options Counseling Resources

# Adoption



# Why do I need to know about adoption?

- “Adoption never considered.”
- “Moms are already parenting.”
- “Cultural environment isn’t supportive of adoption.”



# Myths and Facts about Adoption

## Myths and Facts about Open Adoption

Adoption has changed a lot over the years ... but there are still common misconceptions.

### MYTHS

Choosing adoption means I don't really love my baby.

I got myself into this; I need to do the responsible thing and keep my baby.

If I plan an adoption, I'll never see my child again.

If I plan an adoption, I will be haunted by grief and guilt.

The birthfather doesn't care about me or the baby.

Open adoption is confusing for children.

My friends and family would think badly of me if I planned an adoption.

### FACTS

Individuals who explore adoption are motivated by their love and concern for their child. Typically, people who make an adoption plan are doing so because they feel the child's needs will best be met through adoption.

Considering your options demonstrates taking responsibility. Exploring your circumstances, feelings, and the needs of your child will empower you to make a decision that's right for you.

Today, most U.S. adoptions are open, with some form of ongoing contact. At OA&FS, you develop a relationship with the adoptive family and create a legally enforceable agreement for ongoing visits with their child. Your role is honored and respected.

There is grief and loss in adoption; however, open adoption allows you to have a role in your child's life and the ability to see your child thrive in their adoptive family. This brings you peace of mind and a relationship with your child.

A lack of birthfather involvement does not necessarily reflect a lack of concern. Birthfathers are often unsure about their role. Given the opportunity to have a voice in the process and receive counseling and support, they often become involved in the process.

Secrets are confusing and unhealthy for children. Open adoption removes the mystery and allows the child's questions to be answered openly and honestly. With the love and support of their birth and adoptive families, children develop high self-esteem and a healthy sense of identity.

Many people are unfamiliar with open adoption. You may need to educate your friends and family. If you feel comfortable and confident in your open adoption plan, that will set the stage for how they perceive your decision.

- Myths and Facts about Open Adoption



# Open Adoption as an Alternative to State Adoption

- We work with moms from a wide array of backgrounds.
- There's always a reason someone chooses adoption.
- High risk moms.



# Open Adoption as an Alternative to State Adoption



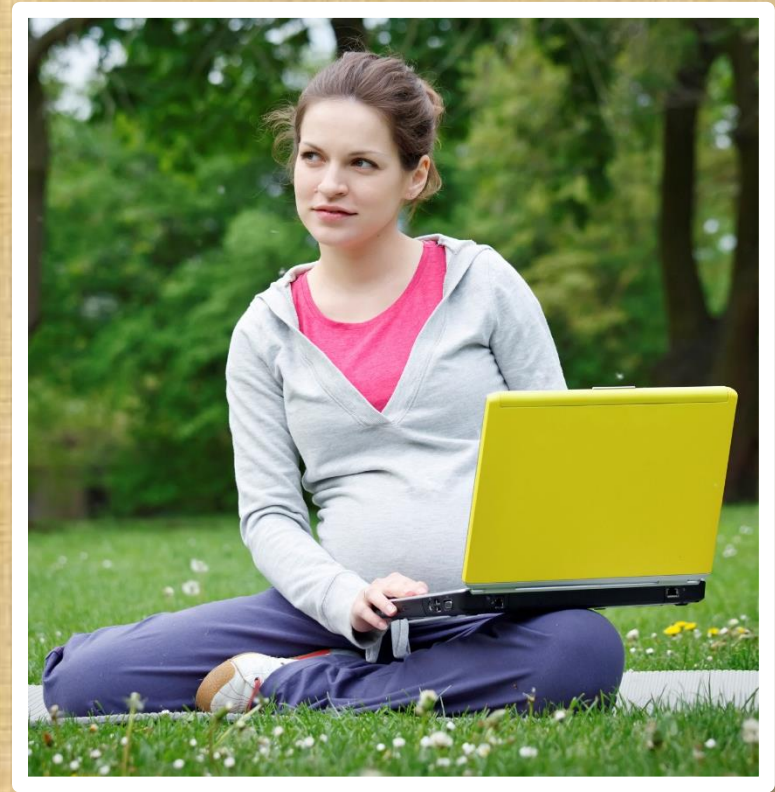
- Collaborative relationship with DHS.
- Proactively planning an open adoption gives them a voice in their adoption plan and an ongoing relationship with their child.

# Open Adoption & Family Services



# When the Choice is Adoption

- Ongoing options counseling provided
- Includes father and extended family
- Materials in Spanish, interpreters available



# How Do You Choose Parents?

- Explore what kind of family they want for their child:
  - Values, lifestyle of adoptive parents
  - Vision of openness
- What OA&FS provides:
  - Process description online.
  - Adoptive parents who want a real friendship
  - Large diverse pool of families
  - Access to comprehensive information



# How Do You Build a Healthy Relationship?

- Adoption planning process:
  - Open adoption agreement
  - 30 years of relationship building expertise
  - Skills and tools to create a strong and healthy foundation to their relationship



# Expectant Moms Shape their Hospital and Adoption Experiences



- Birth and hospital plan, we follow her wishes
- Counselor there to support all parties
- Sign legal consents only when she's ready.

# Placement

- Entrustment ceremony
- Last-minute placements
- Older child placements





# Why are Visits Important?



- For the birthparents ...
- For the child ...
- For the adoptive parents ...

# Collaborative Relationship with the State

- Child avoids possible trauma of the foster care system.
- Mom is assured her child will be placed directly into a safe and permanent home.
- Saves her the humiliation of having her parental rights terminated in court.
- Instead she can choose a family, have legally enforceable ongoing visits and form an extended family relationship with her child and the adoptive family.
- [See program description and videos.](#)

# Benefits of OAFS' Alternative to State Adoptions

- The open adoption process is healing and empowering for her
- If adoption is likely to be in her future, she deserves choices as to what that adoption looks like
- [Watch Sharene's video](#)



# Teens and Open Adoption



- Teens are twice as likely to lose custody of their child to the state as women who give birth in their 20's.
- Parenting often is their first choice, but they need a back up plan.
- Insights Teen Parenting Program stats.

# OA&FS Ongoing Services

- Lifelong Counseling
- Relationship Guidance
- Annual Birthmother's Retreat
- Open Adoption Community



# Open Adoption & Family Services

## 15 reasons to choose OA&FS.

BECAUSE we give absolute equality to every pregnancy option: parenting, abortion and adoption. Our complete focus is on personal choice.

BECAUSE we do not practice coercion.

BECAUSE we provide a safe place for pregnant women and couples to make their choice.

BECAUSE we welcome all belief systems and are not religiously affiliated.

BECAUSE our counselors are highly qualified, experienced and compassionate. Their roster brims with Masters degrees in social work, counseling and marriage and family therapy. Many of them are also licensed clinical social workers.

BECAUSE we have an empowerment model grounded in dignity and respect.

BECAUSE we embrace diversity and welcome LGBTQ clients.

BECAUSE of our high quality services, if a woman thoughtfully explores all of her options and decides she wants to plan an adoption, she will be best served through our agency.

BECAUSE we facilitate high-integrity fully open adoptions in which the birth and adoptive parents form genuine relationships, much like extended family.

BECAUSE our information is transparent and accessible. There are not separate messages (or hidden agendas) for expectant parents and adoptive parents.

BECAUSE we provide lifelong services for birth and adoptive families.

BECAUSE of our thorough counseling and relationship building, our adoption disruption rates of 4-7% are far below the 20% national average.

BECAUSE we value the input of birthparents, adoptive parents and adoptees so much, we include them on our Board of Directors.

BECAUSE we cultivate a vibrant open adoption community and host events such as an annual birthmothers' retreat, summer picnics, holiday parties and speaking engagements from nationally-known open adoption experts.

BECAUSE expectant parents trust us to support them in this complex decision-making process. And many prospective adoptive parents choose us to be their partner in this journey.



Contact us to begin your open adoption journey! 1-800-772-1115.



info@openadoption.org

Para Español 1-800-985-4763

www.openadoption.org

- We're Unique,  
Here's How

# Supporting Women Who Choose Adoption



- Trust her
- Support her birth plan
- Honor her relationship with the adoptive parents
- Birthparents say they wouldn't choose adoption under any other circumstances

# Supporting Women Who Choose Adoption

- Important Questions to ask When Comparing Adoption Services

OA&FS adoptions are unique, like you.

"Open Adoption" means different things to different people. At OA&FS it means you'll have a lifelong relationship with your child and the adoptive family. When comparing services offered by agencies and/or attorneys, you'll want answers to these important questions:

	OA&FS	Attorney	Other Agency
- Am I the deciding voice in all the details of my adoption?	Yes		
- Do I get free counseling and support for the life of my adoption?	Yes		
- Is pregnancy-related financial support available?	Yes		
- Do the adoptive parents genuinely want a lifelong relationship with me that includes ongoing visits?	Yes		
- Will I have a large pool of qualified families to choose from?	Yes (65-85)		
- Can I read the adoptive parents' home studies?	Yes		
- Does your pool include a selection of same sex couples and single parents, as well as married couples?	Yes		
- Will there be a legally enforceable open adoption agreement that outlines the number of ongoing visits?	Yes		
- What is the average number of visits per year?	2-4		
- Can I visit my child and the adoptive family without agency supervision?	Yes		
- Will visits continue until the child is an adult?	Yes		
- If I've already found an adoptive family, can you work with us?	Yes		
- How many open adoptions with ongoing visits have you completed?	Over 1,350		
- How long have you been providing fully open adoption services?	Since 1985		
- Do you have Spanish-speaking Counselors and materials in Spanish?	Yes		

**Pregnant?**

Text "open" to 971-266-0924  
or call 1-800-772-1115 any time.  
(Text answerline available 9 am-5 pm PST M-F)

info@openadoption.org

Para Español 1-800-985-6763

www.openadoption.org





# The Children of Open Adoption



- OA&FS 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary
- Open adoptee video project
- Adoptees value that their birthparents could hand select an adoptive family for them and still stay in their lives
- [Brianna on Open Adoption](#)
- [Watch more open adoptee videos](#)

# Debrief and Take Away

- Do you feel more prepared to provide pregnancy options counseling?
- What new information do you have about open adoption as an alternative to state adopted?
- What new tools, ideas or materials will you take with you today?



# Next Steps

- Call OA&FS with any questions, 1-800-772-1115
- Staff a case
- Meet with expectant parent to provide in depth options counseling and/or open adoption services
- Customize a training for your staff
- Call or email us at [info@openadopt.org](mailto:info@openadopt.org) for more packets, brochures, DVD's and materials
- [Download all handouts for this webinar here](#)

