



- In 30 years we have placed more almost 1500 children with new families
- About 50 waiting families in the pool at any time; families open to all races and special needs
- We tailor openness of adoption to needs and desires of birth parents
- Birth parents do not need to have decided on adoption to call
- Counseling is **free**; we counsel to all options; we travel to meet birth parents where they are
- Birth parents do not need to be 18 to call us; parental consent is not required
- Lawyers are not necessary; we handle all legal matters
- We empower birth parents to make the best choice for themselves and their children



SINCE 1981

**Adoption**Options<sup>®</sup>

*Celebrating 30 Years of Open Arms and Open Minds*



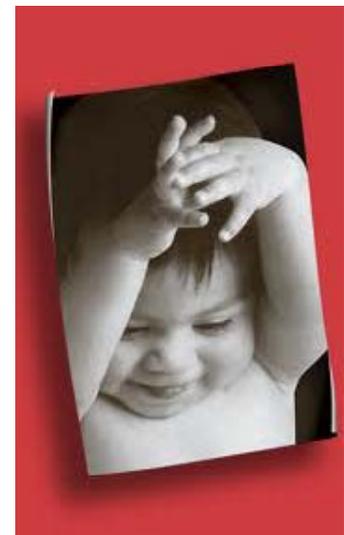


## WHO WE ARE

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Founded in 1981, Adoption Options is a non-profit, non-sectarian, licensed\* adoption agency offering experienced, professional counseling services to birth parents and their families.

\*Hague accredited and state licensed. We place with families without regard to race, religion or marital status.



## WHAT WE DO

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 We provide in-depth, face-to-face **decision making counseling** to people experiencing an unplanned pregnancy...free of charge and free of pressure.

 We provide education, support, and caring to help birth parents and their families consider **all available options** in making the best choice for their child and themselves.





## DECISION-MAKING COUNSELING

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- Is designed to educate and assist those experiencing an unplanned pregnancy. It is free of charge and free of pressure. It helps birth parents consider all available options and make the best choices for their child...and themselves.
- Allows birth parents to develop a plan to fit their needs and the needs of their child. Topics may include grief and loss, future goals, financial needs, pressure from family and friends, and individual plans for birth parents.

# WHAT ABOUT THE BIRTH FATHER?

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- The birth father has the same legal rights as the birth mother.
- The right to public assistance for financial support of a child, if eligible.
- The right to counseling.
- The right to pursue custody.



# HOW TO TALK ABOUT ADOPTION

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## Negatives

“Give the baby up”

“Keep the baby”

“Real parents”

“Real child”

## Positives

“Make a plan of adoption”

“Choose to parent”

“Birth parents”

“Birth child”



# CAN A BIRTH MOM RECEIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE?

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- **YES.** In Colorado, birth parents may receive pregnancy-related expenses including rent, food, maternity clothes, and medical costs beginning three months before the baby is born.
- Our counselors can help birth parents learn about state benefits they may be able to receive.



# DO BIRTH PARENTS HAVE A CHOICE OF ADOPTIVE FAMILIES?

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- **YES.** We have a wide range of families waiting to adopt—who will accept a child of any ethnic/racial background or with a variety of special needs. Birth parents will be able to meet the family if they wish to do so, and ultimately, choose an adoptive family that meets their needs and the needs of their child.
- Even if birth parents meet a family, they are not obligated to relinquish.



## WHAT IS "OPEN" ADOPTION?

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- Adoption can range from totally open—with full identities shared—to almost closed, where birth parents choose not to receive any information about the adoptive family.
- We are able to accommodate a range of options from open to closed adoptions, as determined by the birth parents' needs and wishes.



## WHAT IS "OPEN" ADOPTION?

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- **Semi-open adoption:** The minimum required of adoptive families by our agency. Non-identifying information is shared and communication between birth parents and the adoptive family is done through the agency. The level of openness can increase or decrease over time as relationships between birth parents and adoptive parents change and develop.



## HOSPITAL PLAN

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The plan includes:

- What type of contact the birth mother wants with baby. How much? When?
- Who will be present during birth and during her hospital stay.
- Insurance information
- Any other special circumstances that would be helpful for the hospital staff to know beforehand.
- This plan is shared with the hospital social worker prior to mom's hospital stay.
- It is flexible and may be changed by the birth mother at any time.

## WHAT IS CRADLE CARE?

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- If birth parents are undecided about adoption or parenting, newborns may be placed with a Cradle Care family while the birth parents further explore their decision with their counselor.
- Birth parents may meet the Cradle Care family.
- Birth parents can visit their baby in Cradle Care and/or phone the family to see how their baby is doing.
- From Cradle Care a birth parent can choose to parent or place with an adoptive family.
- A child is usually placed in Cradle Care for up to two weeks.
- All Cradle Care families are screened and approved by the agency and the State of Colorado.

## AFTER PLACEMENT

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- Birth parents are not required to sign any legal paper work until at least four days after the baby is born.
- Birth parents will receive pictures and letters up to five years, and more if they request.
- If birth parents do not want the pictures and letters we keep them in our files in case they want them later.
- Birth parents may receive counseling after the baby is placed if they choose to.



## THE ROLE OF THE AGENCY

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- Non-biased, non-judgmental, professional decision-making counseling for birth parents and their families.
- Navigating the legal process.
- Advocating for birth parents.



## AGENCY GOALS

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- Empowering birth parents
- Supporting good decisions
- Respect for both birth and adoptive families
- No guilt
- No shame





## **MYTHBUSTERS**

### **BIRTH PARENTS DON'T HAVE ANY SAY IN THE ADOPTION PLAN**

Birth parents are an integral part of the adoption plan. Adoption Options works with each birth parent to create an individualized and personal adoption plan. Birth parents have the opportunity to select the adoptive family, to meet that family, and to be part of the placement ceremony. If the birth parents do not wish to be part of that process, Adoption Options can choose the adoptive family on their behalf.

### **BIRTH PARENTS WILL ALWAYS REGRET THEIR DECISION**

Birth parents are comforted by knowing they have made the best decision for themselves and their child. They receive extensive counseling about their decision. More often, regret stems from the unfortunate circumstances surrounding their inability to parent, rather than the decision to place their child for adoption. Counseling is available through Adoption Options for as long as the birth parents feel it is needed.

### **ALL BIRTH MOTHERS ARE IN HIGH SCHOOL**

The majority of birth parents are between the ages of 19 and 26. Since 1981, Adoption Options has counseled birth mothers as young as 12 and as old as 43.

### **YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 18 ARE NOT ABLE TO PLACE THEIR CHILDREN FOR ADOPTION WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS' PERMISSION**

Although the "age of competence" in Colorado is 18 for many decisions, it is not so when it comes to birth and parenting. Any biological parent, regardless of age, is considered an adult under the law and has the right to make independent decisions about their child. Legally, the only person who can make the decision to parent, or to place a child for adoption, is the child's biological parent, not extended family or other interested parties.

### **BIRTH PARENTS DO NOT CARE ABOUT THEIR BABIES WHICH IS WHY THEY "GIVE THEM AWAY"**

Birth parents love their babies. They make incredibly brave and unselfish decisions to place their children with adoptive families to give them the opportunity to have better lives than they feel they can provide.

### **BIRTH PARENTS ARE IRRESPONSIBLE AND MANY OF THEM ABUSE DRUGS AND ALCOHOL**

The mere fact that a birth parent seeks to make a plan of adoption says a lot about their strength of character. It takes responsibility and courage to pursue a plan of adoption. We work with birth parents who are very active in seeking medical treatment and taking care of themselves during their pregnancies. On the other hand, we work with birth parents who do use drugs and/or alcohol during pregnancy. This does not always mean they are irresponsible. Denial can play a

huge role in an unplanned pregnancy. If a person is unaware she is pregnant, she may not take care of herself the same way as if she had accepted her pregnancy.

### **BIRTH FATHERS HAVE NO RIGHTS UNLESS THE BIRTH PARENTS ARE MARRIED**

Birth fathers have rights even if they are not married to the birth mother. Adoption Options must make every effort to locate the birth father and inform them of the birth mother's wish to make a plan of adoption. Birth fathers have a say in the placement of their child. They may participate in the plan of adoption or they may choose to parent their child.

### **SOCIAL SERVICES ALWAYS GETS INVOLVED IN ADOPTIONS**

Social services does not get involved in voluntary relinquishments. If there is a plan of adoption, there is no need unless there are indications of abuse or neglect, or serious concerns about the safety of the child. If there are concerns, the birth parent counselor may initiate a report to social services. Nonetheless, if the birth parents wish to follow through on their adoption plan, social services will allow them to continue to work with Adoption Options to make the best decision for themselves and their child.

### **ADOPTIVE PARENTS SEE ADOPTION AS SECOND BEST**

Most adoptive families are unable to have biological children. This is a source of great sadness for them, however, they are able to move forward and accept adoption as a positive way to build their families. They see adoption as a second chance to be parents to a child they will love and nurture.

### **OPEN ADOPTION MEANS THAT IDENTIFYING INFORMATION SUCH AS LAST NAMES AND ADDRESSES IS SHARED**

Adoption Options never shares identifying information unless and until it is agreed upon by all parties. Adoption Options believes that relationships take time to develop. If the relationship between birth parents and an adoptive family grows to the point that all parties feel comfortable sharing identifying information, that is their choice. Adoption Options will support that choice, but it is not required.

### **ADOPTIVE FAMILIES PROMISE TO KEEP IN CONTACT WITH BIRTH PARENTS AND THEN DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH**

Rarely do adoptive families make promises they do not honor. Communication is a major consideration in matching birth parents and adoptive families. Although the adoptive family's obligation to communicate is moral and not legal, Adoption Options counsels them to understand and follow through on their commitments to birth parents for the benefit of their child.

### **THERE ARE NO ADOPTIVE FAMILIES FOR HISPANIC OR AFRICAN AMERICAN BABIES**

Families of all different races are interested in adopting minority children. Both white and minority families may adopt trans-rationally, and there are many adoptive families for Hispanic and African American babies. Adoption Options recruits all types of adoptive families to make adoption available to all racial groups. While trans-racial adoption should be carefully considered, such adoptions can create healthy, happy and stable families.