

About Adoption

Adoption is an option you should be aware of if you do not feel ready to parent. Please read the "[About Pregnancy](#)" section of this website for information about the medical concerns related to continuing a pregnancy through delivery. Counseling and support services are a vital part of making an adoption plan. Many agencies, both public and private, can help birthparents develop an adoption plan.

There are several types of adoption plans for a woman to consider with her adoption counselor: open adoption, semi-open adoption, and confidential adoption. Each plan has advantages and disadvantages for a woman to consider. In Alaska, adoption files, and the identity of the birthparents, remain closed until the adopted child reaches the age of 18 years. At that time, the child may formally request his or her original birth certificate from the Bureau of Vital Statistics.

An open adoption may include selecting the adoptive family and planning for on-going communication about the child. A licensed adoption agency or an experienced attorney or social worker can help you with the many decisions and legal issues about adoption. See the "[Resources](#)" section of this website for specific information on agencies or attorneys who handle adoption.

The Emotional Side of the Adoption Decision

Adoption is a process, not an event. It is important to the woman's future well-being to approach the adoption decision as one that will have a life-long effect. The adoption decision is permanent and final, and as such, represents a loss. How a woman copes with loss and the grief that accompanies it is the key to future relationships, parenting and a healthy self-image. Each woman's situation and reactions are her own. Some women are able to move on after placing their child for adoption.

The facts surrounding each adoption may affect the nature of the response. In some cases, it may be similar to the grief over the loss of a loved one. Eventually pain subsides and memories remain. Evidence shows unmarried women who made adoption plans advanced further in education, were more likely to eventually marry, and were less likely to require public assistance than single birthmothers who chose to raise their children alone.

On the other hand, some women who relinquish children for adoption report persistent experience of grief, denial, and despair. Women who are not able to deal with their sense of loss tend to report internalized feelings of anger and guilt even years later. Pre- and post-adoption counseling to assist with decision-making and to provide support to the birthmother is essential to healthy emotional and psychological adjustment following adoption.