

A Birth Parent's  
**Resource Guide**  
*for Creating an*  
**ADOPTION PLAN**



**You have choices. We are here to help.**



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*Do you want to talk?*

*Do you have questions?*

*Do you want to have  
a personal, private  
conversation with  
an adoption counselor?*

*You may call anytime –  
24 hours a day,  
7 days a week at  
410-683-2100*

**To provide** birthparents with a sensitive and affirming environment to explore the option of creating an adoption plan.

**To provide** adoption services in a caring, informative, and compassionate environment, allowing birthparents and adoptive parents to explore every aspect of adoption, and assisting throughout the adoption process.

**To find** the most loving, caring, and suitable home for the baby.

**To provide** adoption-related services to birthparents, adoptive parents and adopted children, including counseling before, during and after the adoption has taken place.



# Our Mission



# Services We Provide.

## *We understand ...*

- 🧡 An unplanned pregnancy can be a difficult time filled with confusion and uncertainty.
- 🧡 It is only natural for your thoughts to be racing with questions and for you to feel scared and overwhelmed.
- 🧡 You may be concerned about how you will support both yourself and a baby.
- 🧡 You want to make the best decision, but may not know where to begin.

## *We provide...*

- 🧡 Caring, compassionate adoption counselors available to talk 24 hours a day.
- 🧡 A confidential, safe and non-judgmental environment in which to explore your questions and feelings.
- 🧡 Information to help you determine if creating an adoption plan is the right decision for you.
- 🧡 Referrals to medical and legal help if you need it.
- 🧡 Counseling and a support network throughout the entire adoption process, including after the child has been placed with the adoptive family.
- 🧡 Personal meetings with you in our office, your home, or at a place of your choice.

Many birth mothers have had thoughts similar to the ones you may be having now. Thinking about the following questions will help guide you toward making the best decision for you and your baby. You can use these questions as discussion points when you meet with your adoption counselor.

*How supportive are my family and friends?*

*How much do the reactions and opinions of my family and friends matter to me?*

*If I decide to raise this child, can I financially support this child?*

*Will I be able to provide a financially stable home for this child?*

*If I decide to raise this child, can I assure the health and safety of this child?*

*If I decide to raise this child, how will my life change?*

*If I decide to choose adoption for this child, how will my life change?*

*How do I get along with my family and friends? Will having a child change this?*

*Do I expect that this child will make my life better and happier?*

*Do I expect this child will help me get back together with the birth father?*

*Am I ready to be a parent?*

*Am I confident that my friends and family will help and support me, regardless of my decision?*

*Am I willing and able to manage the needs of my baby?*

*How will parenting my child affect my personal and professional goals?*

*Am I aware of the intensive screening process of potential adoptive families?*

*Will my child benefit from my decision, if I choose to create an adoption plan?*

# Is Adoption the Best Decision?

# Types of Adoption.

There are two different types of adoption. There is an agency adoption and a private adoption.

## ***Agency Adoption***

An adoption agency is licensed and monitored by the state. ***Adoption Makes Family*** is licensed and monitored by the Maryland State Department of Human Resources.

Your interests are protected by the ongoing monitoring conducted by the Department of Human Resources.

An adoption agency provides you, the birth parent, with the assistance of professionally trained adoption counselors to assist you in determining if adoption is the best option for you. The licensed, trained social workers and adoption counselors at ***Adoption Makes Family*** are available to you to help you before, during and after the adoption of your child.

An agency also assists you in identifying the adoptive family who most meets your dreams of the best family to raise your baby. ***Adoption Makes Family*** is required under the laws of Maryland to thoroughly screen adoptive families, completing criminal background checks, child abuse clearance checks, reviewing financial status, interviewing the adoptive couple, their family, friends, and other children if they have them. If you decide to be involved in selecting the adoptive family, your adoption counselor will meet with you to help you in the selection process.

After the placement of your child in the adoptive home, the adoption agency assists you in maintaining ongoing contact for you to receive letters and pictures if that is what you have chosen.

***Adoption Makes Family*** is a non-profit adoption agency with a mission to assist you,



at no fee, in creating an adoption plan that meets your needs and the needs of your child.

### ***Private Adoption***

When the birth parents already have an adoptive family selected, the birth parents will hire a private attorney to assist in the legal process of completing an adoption plan. These legal fees are paid for by the adoptive family. Private adoptions may not offer the same level of pre-adoption screening and post-adoption monitoring and support as an agency adoption.

**It is unlawful in the state of Maryland for physicians, obstetricians, gynecologists or attorneys to help birth parents select and match with an adoptive family.**

### ***Choosing a Local Agency Versus an Agency from Another State***

***Adoption Makes Family*** is licensed by the State of Maryland and is located in Cockeysville, Maryland, in Baltimore County, and serves all of Maryland and surrounding areas. ***Adoption Makes Family*** works to create adoption plans with local families so there is always a connection with the adoptive family. This also allows for ongoing contact between the Agency and the family, thus giving greater opportunity to keep birth parents informed about the health and development of the child.

Agencies not licensed in the State of Maryland are not legally permitted to advertise in the State of Maryland. They may not follow Maryland law and may encourage birth parents to follow the laws from their state. Post-adoption agreements may not be able to be enforced with an agency outside the State of Maryland.

# Types of Adoption

# Creating an Adoption Plan

**Creating an adoption plan can be a wonderful choice for both your child and yourself.**

## **Benefits to the Birthparent**

**The opportunity** to continue moving toward your future goals

**The assurance** that your child will be raised by a caring family that will provide numerous positive opportunities for your child

**The choice** to consider different adoptive families and to choose which family is best for your child

**The option** to meet potential adoptive families, in person, before making a decision

**The opportunity** to provide your child with a financially and emotionally supportive family

## **Benefits to Your Child**

**A family** who is highly screened and emotionally and financially prepared to raise your child

**A family** who is able to devote significant time to your child

**A family** who is ready and able to manage any challenges that may come with raising a child

**A family** who has the availability to be involved in your child's school and extracurricular activities

**A family** who can provide the highest educational opportunities and excellent healthcare for your child

**A family** who will provide a safe and stable home filled with the love you want for your child

*You will find a detailed explanation of the steps for creating an adoption plan at [www.adoptionmakesfamily.org](http://www.adoptionmakesfamily.org)*

There are many myths about adoption that you may have heard. The following are some common myths. Information is given here to clear up the misconceptions.

- **A loving mother would never want to create an adoption plan.**

*A mother who decides to create an adoption plan is making the decision to put her child's interests above all else. Choosing to create an adoption plan is a selfless and thoughtful choice, made when a woman does not feel prepared to parent. Many women make this loving choice for their child – a choice that goes back to biblical times, as in the story of Moses.*

- **My child will be upset or angry at me for choosing adoption.**

*Your child will grow up in a loving environment with the knowledge that he or she has two sets of parents. Your child will be assured that you made the adoption plan out of love and concern for what was in his or her best interests. Your child will be told about you and that you made the selfless decision to provide opportunities and experiences your child might not otherwise have been able to receive.*

*Many adoptive families create scrapbooks about the birth parents and the adoption process. These scrapbooks allow your child to know you and to realize the adoption plan was created out of love. You are encouraged to send letters and pictures to your child as well. You can share your thoughts about why you created an adoption plan in your letters.*

- **I will be completely cut off from my child and will have no knowledge of his or her life.**

*You receive pictures of and letters about your child each year until your child reaches the age of eighteen, as is the policy of **Adoption Makes Family**. If you would like to have more contact*

# Myths about Adoption

*with your child, our adoption counselors can introduce you to adoptive families that are open to such arrangements.*

- **My relationship with my boyfriend or husband is not going well. Having a baby will help us become closer.**

*This is an understandable thought that many birthmothers may have. Yet having a child is not a guaranteed solution to your relationship concerns. If you are experiencing relationship problems, it's best to work out such issues with your significant other directly rather than using the baby as a method to "fix" the issues.*

- **Raising a baby is easy.**

*Being a parent is much more difficult than it may seem at first. Parenting involves balancing all of your responsibilities. You may be going to school, and/or working. You do all of that while at the same time being a parent. Raising a child is also a large financial commitment which includes money for food, diapers, baby supplies and day care.*

- **While in the hospital, birthparents are not allowed to be in contact with the baby after the birth.**

*This is simply not true. The decision to interact with the baby is completely up to the birthparents. Birthparents are encouraged to follow their own wishes as to whether to see, hold, and feed the child.*

- **After the child is born, I am expected to "move on and forget about it."**

*Creating an adoption plan is the beginning of a life-long journey, for both the birthparents and the adoptive family. The adoption process is always evolving and the birthparents are able to be a part of their child's life through letters and pictures. We encourage birthparents to participate in counseling after their child has been placed with the adoptive family, for guidance and support.*



It is likely that you have many questions about the adoption process. This is a list of commonly asked questions and their answers.

- **Can a birthparent under the age of 18 make a decision to create an adoption plan without the consent of a parent?**

*A birthparent who is under 18 years of age is encouraged to talk with a parent about the adoption plan. However, the birthparent is considered emancipated in the area of parenthood and can make an adoption plan for the child without parental consent. Maryland law requires that birthparents under 18 years of age have an attorney. The attorney will be provided at no cost to you.*

- **What is the role of the birthfather in the adoption process?**

*The birthfather of the child has parental rights. Therefore, **Adoption Makes Family** is required by law to make every effort to notify the individual that he has been identified as the father. Once notified, the birthfather can either consent and agree with the adoption plan or object to the plan. If **Adoption Makes Family** is unable to locate the birthfather, it must be proven that every effort has been made to locate him. After this evidence is given, a Family Court Judge will terminate the birthfather's rights, approving the adoption.*

- **How are potential adoptive families reviewed and accepted? It's important that my child is raised by a good family in a safe home.**

*Each family adopting through **Adoption Makes Family** must submit to extensive background checks to assure that they will be able to provide the child with a safe, supportive, and loving environment. Another part of the process involves*

*an adoption counselor visiting the potential adoptive family in their home and evaluating the family in their natural environment. **Adoption Makes Family** collects personal references for each potential adoptive family. They also provide parent training and review effective parenting skills.*

***View videos of waiting families at [www.adoptionmakesfamily.org](http://www.adoptionmakesfamily.org)***

- **How much information will the potential adoptive families share with me?**

*Each adoptive family creates a scrapbook and a “Dear Birth Parent” letter that will give you an idea about their family. The scrapbook includes pictures of the adoptive family and descriptions of their day-to-day life as well as their hobbies and interests. Each family includes information about their relationships with each other and relationships with extended family members. Each scrapbook also includes information about the family’s home, including a picture. Birthparents will also have the opportunity to ask further questions and develop a relationship with the adoptive family during a personal meeting before the birth of the child.*

- **Are both OPEN and CLOSED adoptions available?**

*Yes, both open and closed adoptions are available. Open adoption means that information may be shared between birth and adoptive parents and that there is some type of contact. The degree of openness depends on the wishes of the birthparents.*

- **How will the adoptive family tell my child about the adoption process and my role as the birthparent?**

*Families often tell the child about their adoption from a young age so that the child can grow up with this understanding. Families start by asking the birthparent what he or she wants the child to know. They then share that information with the child. In addition, if the adoptive family and the birthparents have met, the adoptive family can share stories about their time interacting with the birthparents.*





## These are the Maryland laws that apply to adoption.

- If a birthparent is under the age of eighteen, legal representation will be required to execute a consent for adoption.
- Legal representation is paid for by the adoptive family.
- Medical expenses will be paid for by the adoptive family if the birthmother does not have insurance coverage.
- Both birthparents must agree to the adoption of the child. There are provisions for a situation when the birth father is unknown or unable to be found.
- Birthparent(s) have 30 days after signing the adoption consent to elect to keep the child. After the 30-day period, the consent is irrevocable.
- A certain amount of personal information is required of the birthparents. For instance, demographic information, education and work history, multigenerational health history, and a description and history of marital and family relationships. Identifying information is not given to adoptive parents.
- It is unlawful for a physician, attorney, nurse, or other professional to create an adoption plan for a birthparent. Adoption plans must be created by a licensed child placing agency.

## Payment of Birth Mother Expenses

### The Adoptive Family may pay:

- Reasonable expenses for transportation for medical care associated with your pregnancy or birth of your child.
- Reasonable expenses for food, clothing and shelter associated with your pregnancy or birth of your child.
- Reasonable expenses associated with any required court appearance relating to the adoption, including transportation, food, and lodging expenses.

To qualify for the payment of the above expenses, your physician must submit a letter to **Adoption Makes Family** stating that you are unable to work or otherwise support yourself because of medical reasons associated with your pregnancy or the birth of your child.

Your Adoption Counselor can speak with you in greater detail regarding the payment of birth mother expenses.

# Steps of the Adoption Process

**Creating an adoption plan can feel very overwhelming. We are here to provide support at each point in your journey.**

## **Our process:**

The first step in the process at ***Adoption Makes Family*** is a telephone interview with an adoption counselor. We will start with where you are, listening to your specific questions and responding to your individual needs and questions.

If you feel you would like to explore the adoption plan further, a packet will be sent to you – either by mail or email, in a confidential envelope. The packet is the intake questionnaire that helps us get to know you and start identifying potential adoptive parents.

Once you return the intake questionnaire to ***Adoption Makes Family***, a personal visit will be set up for you to meet the adoption counselor in person. During that meeting, we will talk more in depth about your decision to pursue an adoption plan. You are given every opportunity to talk about your options in a non-judgmental, supportive atmosphere. At that meeting, we can start to review potential adoptive parent profiles. We can even select one if you would like.

After the initial meeting, you may decide you would like to meet the prospective adoptive parents. If so, our next meeting will be with the prospective adoptive parents.

Depending on how far in advance of your due date you have contacted the Agency, we may be able to have more meetings, either with the birth parent's counselor alone or with the prospective adoptive parents.

When the baby is born, you will contact your adoption counselor at ***Adoption Makes Family***. As you have already established a relationship with

your adoption counselor, he or she will be the one to come to the hospital to help you in the next stage of creating an adoption plan. This meeting gives you another opportunity to talk about your feelings about the creation of the adoption plan. If you decide you want to move forward with the plan, that is when the formal legal paper work for processing the adoption plan is started.

While in the hospital, you have the option of spending time with the baby, or deciding to have the baby stay in the nursery. The amount of time you spend with the baby is completely your choice. It is the philosophy of **Adoption Makes Family** to provide you with support and counseling throughout the adoption process while you are in the hospital. We are here to support you while you review your thoughts and feelings about the adoption plan.

If you decide to move forward with the adoption plan, the baby will be discharged to **Adoption Makes Family** only after you have had an opportunity to have your personal time with the baby and you have decided you are ready to leave.

The relationship between you and **Adoption Makes Family** does not end on the day of discharge from the hospital. There is counseling available to you if you would like. You are welcome to meet with your adoption counselor, or we will help you to find a counselor in an area close to you.

The relationship also continues through the letter and pictures you will receive from the adoptive family throughout your child's life. Just as important, you are also encouraged to send letters and pictures to **Adoption Makes Family** to be forwarded to the adoptive family.

The adoption plan is an evolving process that will grow through the years. You are encouraged to stay as close as you feel comfortable. The support is here for you.



Do you have  
more questions?  
Please call us  
at any time,  
24 hours a day,  
7 days a week  
at 410-683-2100.



*From One Heart to Another*

**410-683-2100**

Adoption Makes Family is a licensed non-profit agency, working with birth parents and adoptive parents.

***Adoption is an unselfish gift of love from the heart of a birth parent to the heart of the adoptive family.***



**Please visit our website to learn more about adoption**  
**[www.adoptionmakesfamily.org](http://www.adoptionmakesfamily.org)**