



Adoption as an Option in Family Planning Settings

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December 7, 2017



Katie Saul:

Hello everyone, and thank you for joining us today. This is Katie Saul from the Family Planning National Training Center and I'm happy to welcome you all to today's webinar, Adoption as an Option in Family Planning Settings.

Just a few things before we begin today. Everyone on the webinar today is muted given the large number of participants that we have. So please use the chat function at the bottom, left hand side of your screen to ask any questions at any time. And we'll address all of your questions at the end of the presentation today.

Just so you all are aware, a recording and the transcript of today's webinar will be available on fpntc.org next week. And, we'll also post the slide deck, that we're presenting today, with talking points so that you can use the slides to train your own staff and networks if you wish.

Okay, so I'd like to introduce our speaker today, Patrice Fanning is the Training Director at JSI Research and Training Institute in Denver and has been a consultant with JSI for about 22 years. Patrice is trained on a variety of topics in family planning settings, such as human trafficking, motivational interviewing, pregnancy options, counseling, adoption awareness including infant adoption awareness, delivering difficult news to patients, clinic efficiency and improving patient experience.

Prior to her work with JSI, she was an adoption counselor for Adoption Options, a

Denver based adoption agency. Patrice also worked with Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains for over 15 years as a clinic manager. She was a trainer for new staff and also a counseling supervisor there. And, Patrice lives and Colorado with her two adopted daughters.

So, with that, Patrice, I'm going to turn it over to you.

Patrice Fanning:

Great, thank you so much Katie and welcome, good morning, or good afternoon depending upon where you're calling in from today. So, let's go ahead and get started.

Objectives

- Identify at least two types of domestic adoptions
- List three examples of positive adoption language
- Answer frequently asked questions about adoption
- Describe how to make an effective referral for adoption support



Pregnancy testing and counseling is a core family planning service and a common reason for a client's visit. According to the QFP, test results should be presented, to the client, followed by options counseling in accordance with the recommendations, from professional medical associations such as ACAR and AAP.

The National Family Planning Training Center has resources on FPNTC.org, that has specifics on pregnancy testing and options counseling. However, even with training, the news of an unintended pregnancy can be challenging. Having a solid understanding of patients options, resources, referrals, can help family planning providers and counselors navigate these difficult discussions with our patients.

Our discussion today will focus on adoption, an option that some providers know little about. Specifically, by the end of this webinar, you should be able to, identify at least two types of domestic adoptions, answer frequently asked questions about adoption and describe how to make an effective referral for adoption support.

Understanding Adoption

- Children that cannot be raised by their birth parents become permanent legal members of another family.
- Adoption is a process, with legal, social and emotional aspects.
- There is no one right decision for everyone.

Source: Adoption Council and the American Adoption Blog 2017, [Adoption Tax Credit](#)
[Preseved in the House and Senate](#)



Understanding adoption on a basic level, including why someone may choose adoption as their option, can help family planning providers support their patients in determining next steps. Adoption occurs when children, who cannot be raised by their birth parents, become permanent, legal members of another family. Once an adoption is legally finalized, it's permanent. Adoption is more than a legal one-time event, it's a lifelong process, with long-term impact or everyone involved. This could include, the birth mother, birth father, relatives and the adoptive family. Remember, it's important here because everyone's situation is unique, many women and their partners choose adoption because they do not feel ready, or able, to raise a child. There isn't one right decision for everyone, it's a personal choice.

Domestic Adoption in the U.S.

- 18,329 infant adoptions annually (small increase from 2007-2014)
- 0.5% of all live births and 1.1% of births to single parents are domestic adoptions
- \$15,000 to \$45,000 is the average cost of private domestic adoption for the adoptive parent. By contrast, foster care adoptions are usually no cost to the adoptive parent.
- The cost of adoption for the birth parent is usually minimal, if any.

Source: National Council for Adoption, Adoption: By the Numbers. Dr. Jo Jones and Paul Placek, [Adoption: By the Numbers](#)

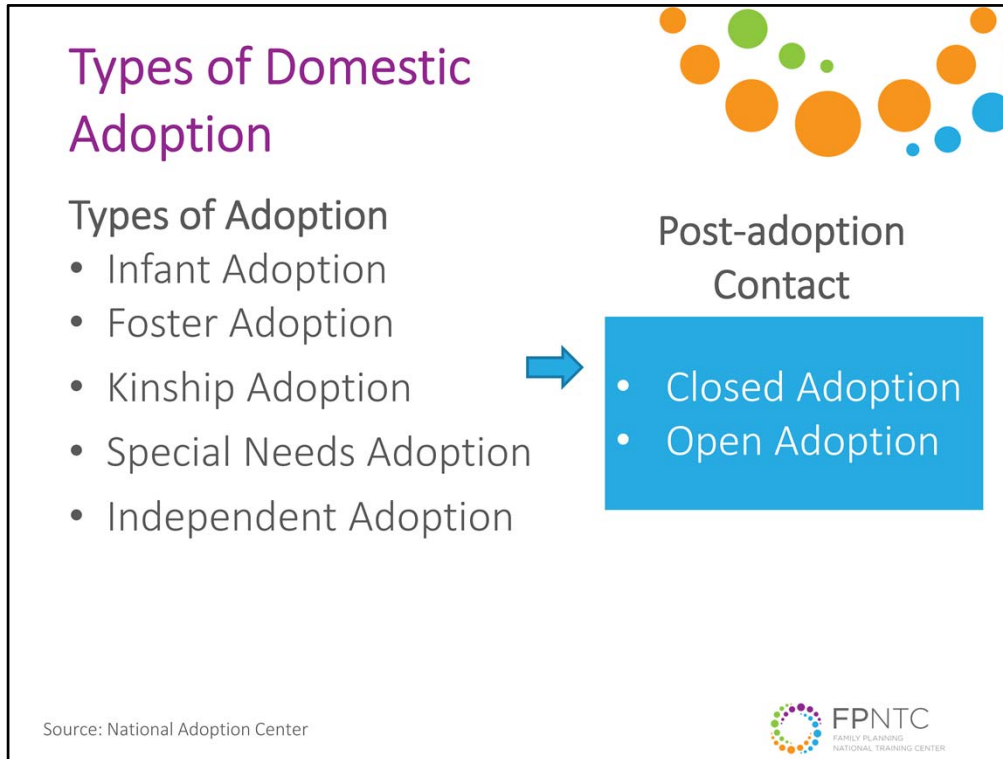


First, I'd like to provide a little background on domestic adoption in the United States. About 18,329 infant adoptions are recorded annually. There was a small increase from 2007 to 2014, however, current and accurate statistics are often very difficult to gather. In 1975 the Federal Government stopped requiring states to track or report on the number of private adoptions. The number of all US private adoptions has actually fallen. This could be attributed to the increase in international adoptions.

However, the public foster care adoptions has risen. Domestic adoptions represent 0.5% of all live births and 1.1% of all births to single parents. The cost of adoption is influenced by state laws, agency services, legal fees and agreements with both birth and adoptive parents. According to surveys conducted by The Adoptive Families, an organization to assist and support both birth parents and adoptive families, the medium cost of a domestic adoption, for the adoptive parent in the United States, is about \$30,000. With a range between \$15,000 and \$45,000.

It also takes about two years for an adoption process to be completed. On the other hand, there is not virtually no cost to an adoptive parent when adopting a child from foster care. There is usually little or no cost to the birth parents, in fact, most adoption agencies cover the cost of prenatal care and counseling, some even cover housing and make efforts to get the birth parent on Medicaid. Again, this is

something that will vary from state to state.



There are several types of adoption that we will be discussing today, infant adoption, foster adoption, kinship adoption, special needs adoption, independent adoption and, of course, we will also be addressing post-adoption contact, closed adoption and open adoption.

Let's start first with infant adoption. Infant adoption is closely associated with their work as family planning providers. Infant adoption involves children under the age of two years old. There are more people wanting to adopt infants than there are infants available. Many people who want to adopt an infant, will try to adopt through an intermediary, such as a lawyer, physician or other facilitator, rather than go through licensed adoption agencies. They may do this because they have heard that the process might be quicker. Not only is this not true, but it may also not include important aspects of adoption such as counseling for birth parents and adoptive families.

Let's discuss foster adoption. This involves placing a child in a home as a foster child. There is an expectation and hope that he or she will become available to adopt.

Kinship adoption is when someone in the family adopts a child, infant, sibling or an older child.

Special needs adoption includes factors such as age, background, physical, mental and emotional challenges. Typically, children who have special needs have been separated from their birth family and live in foster care. Most children are school age and may have a physical or mental disability.

Independent adoption. Those are adoptions that are not arranged through an adoption agency. There is usually no counseling for birth parents and the infants are not usually eligible for financial assistance for any type of special needs that may not have been noticed at birth.

Finally, adoptions can be closed or open. This determines the extent of contact and of communication between the birth parents and the adoptive family.

Closed adoption means that there is no identifying information or communication shared between the birth parents and the adoptive family. The adoptive family receives non-identifying information about the children right before he or she joins the family. After the adoption is finalized, the court records are sealed.

Open adoption allows for some form of association and communication among birth parents, adoptive parents and the adopted child. This can range from pictures and letters, the sharing of phone calls, contact through an intermediary or open contact with all parties. Today, most US infant adoptions, include some form of open adoption.

Starting the Discussion about Adoption

Use open ended questions



“What are your thoughts on adoption?”

NOT...



“Have you considered adoption?”



Let's discuss starting the discussion about adoption. As with all options counseling, it's important to use open ended questions. For example, tell me more, how do you feel, what are your thoughts. Open ended questions are those questions that usually start with a who, what, where, when, why and cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. Often in the family planning setting, women coming in for pregnancy testing are already aware that they're pregnant and are looking for confirmation.

When asked about her pregnancy, a woman will often respond with, “I'm excited”, “I'm not happy about it, but I'm going to have a baby anyway” or “I want information on abortion”. It's less common for a woman to ask for information about adoption but, when she does, we want to make sure that we are comfortable, knowledgeable and able to provide the same, accurate information as we do with other options. When a woman is undecided or ambivalent about pregnancy, we should ask, “what are your thoughts on adoption?” That is an open ended question versus, “have you considered adoption?” Which, is truly a closed ended question.

Using Positive Language

Negative	Positive
Real Parent	Birth Parent or Biological Parent
Give Up for Adoption	Make an Adoption Plan
Put Up for Adoption	Choose Adoption
Keep Your Baby	Parent Your Child
Unwanted Pregnancy	Unintended Pregnancy
Unwanted Child	Child Placed for Adoption
Adopted Child	My Child / Their Child
Is Adopted	Was Adopted
Adoptive Parent	Parent
Track Down Parents	Search
Adoptable Child	Waiting Child
Relinquished	Made an Adoption Plan

Source: [Using Positive Adoption Language](#)



When discussing adoption it's important to use positive adoption language with patients to help combat common adoption stereotypes. Take a moment to look at the slide in front of you. The left hand of the slide will demonstrate some examples of potential negative adoption language. The right hand of the slide illustrates examples of positive adoption language. We would like to encourage people to view adoption as a positive option for those who are, or cannot, be ready to fully provide for a child. It's also respectful to birth parents who make loving and courageous decisions to choose adoption, to use proper language.

Here are some examples of how we change negative adoption language to positive adoption language. Using the term adopted child, often singles out a child who has become a part of a family. The correct term would be, my child or their child. Making an adoption plan is very empowering for the birth parent, it allows for choice, control and the opportunity to set limits and boundaries. Saying that a woman can't keep a child implies that the child is an object.

Calling a child unwanted can do significant damage to their self-esteem, as well as the self esteem of the birth parent. When a child is adopted, it does not mean that they were not wanted, it simply means their birth parents could not adequately provide for them.



Let's talk about some frequently asked questions. When providing options counseling, several common questions are asked by patients who inquire about adoption. The first is, “when do I have to make my decision?” Most states require that the final decision, to place a child for adoption, be made after the baby is born. This decision may also be impacted by the gestation of the pregnancy, if the patient is considering abortion as an alternative.

Birth parents also often ask, “if I choose adoption, will I know what happens to my baby?” Making an adoption plan does not necessarily mean that the patient won't have any future contact with their child. In the past, adoptions were surrounded by secrecy, as discussed earlier, there are several types of adoptions and, today, most infant adoptions have some degree of openness.

Some birth parents may be daunted by the legal process at hand and could ask if they need a lawyer. Adoption laws and processes vary by state. It's best to refer patients to adoption resources and, or services to find information that is very specific to your location. Finally, family planning patients who receive a positive pregnancy test result and would like to consider adoption, would likely ask, what should they do next.

First and foremost, providers should encourage the patients to identify their sources of support, family members, friends, the birth father and have a conversation with them. Seeking out adoption specialists in that area is a good next step to begin to explore a plan.

Making a Referral for Adoption Services

- Current and accurate knowledge of local adoption providers and services.
- Printed brochures with contact names and information are preferred.

Administration for Children and Families/Children's Bureau: National Foster Care and Adoption Directory Search

[National Foster Care & Adoption Directory Search](#)



Making a referral for adoption services. As you know, our referrals change very quickly. It's important to have current information of established agencies in your area that provide adoption services. Having updated printed materials and handouts are important for a client who is considering adoption. Have these resources readily available for them and their support network.

Know your own local resources. Having a persons name with contact information for your clients is very helpful. Recognize that some adoption providers are faith based, some are specialized by types of adoption. Since the adoption process can vary by type, for example, with regard to court order obligations, mandatory counseling and pre-imposed placement visits. It's important to be aware of the types of adoption that your referral agencies support in order to provide your clients with what they need. Either specific or general services.

The directory on ACF's website, as mentioned in this slide, can be very helpful in finding resources in your state including, licensed adoption agencies and adoption support groups. The resource is very easy to use, click on the link and click on your individual state.

Resources

- [Administration for Children and Families Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)
- [National Council for Adoption](#)
- [Adopt and Connect](#)

Related Resources on FPNTC.org

- [Exploring all Options: Pregnancy Counseling without Bias Video](#)
- [Putting the QFP into Practice: Pregnancy Testing and Counseling eLearning](#)
- [Title X Orientation](#): Section 9: Project Services and Clients, and specifically the Pregnancy Testing section



Additional resources. Administration for Children and Families Child Welfare Information Gateway, ACF, has a lot of information on adoption. This is a great resource to browse if you're looking to increase your knowledge or add resources to your clinic. The National Council for Adoption has many general resources and adoption agency directory and information for expectant parents and professionals like yourselves.

Adopt and Connect is a 24 hour hotline for pregnant or expectant mothers. It also offers resources by city and state, which can be very helpful for all of you. There are a couple of great trainings on the FPNTC.org, that focus on options counseling in general. A wonderful video that demonstrates effective options counseling and an e-learning module from Putting the QFP into Practice Theories.

I would like to thank you all for your time and we will now open our discussion up for questions.



Katie Saul:

Great, thank you Patrice. We messaged out to all participants to feel free to chat in your questions at any time, and we'll read them out to Patrice as they come in. And, we do have one question already Patrice, which is, in an open adoption, can the birth parent change their mind about the contact they have with the adoptive family and child at any time?

Patrice Fanning:

Yes. That is one of the advantages of having some openness in an adoption. The birth parent actually drives that process and, in the beginning, the birth parent may decide that they want pictures and letters and more contact and as the child gets older, they may decide that it might not be in the best interests of the child, or it might not be in their best interests. And, they are able to change at any time the requirements and the things that they originally wanted.

Katie Saul:

Okay great, thank you. And, we have another question, can the patients partner come into the room when you're explaining adoption and other options?

Patrice Fanning:

I would answer that question as we do with all of our counseling situations in our clinic. It's usually best to speak to the patient first in private, making sure that, that's a confidential interaction. And, then as we begin to discuss options and we find out that the patient has a support network, possibly somebody there with them, it can be wonderful to include them

in that process. So, yes.

Katie Saul:

Great. Okay, we'll give it a couple more seconds for any additional questions to come in and, in the meantime, I just want to... I'm going to leave us on this slide that has the resources and just let participants know that these websites that Patrice referred today, as well as the related resources on FPNTC.org, are all located in the pregnancy testing and counseling training package on the website. So, please have a look there for all issues pertaining to pregnancy testing and counseling.

And actually, Patrice, we have another question. In your experience, what percentage of women, with an unintended pregnancy, make an adoption plan?

Patrice Fanning:

So, in my personal experience, that number is very low. And, even the patients that I have counseled, who have come in and said, I really would like to consider adoption, I don't have an actual percentage, but I can tell you that it's low.

Katie Saul:

Okay, great. At this time, we don't have any other questions so I just want to let participants know again, that we expect to have a recording of today's session, the slides, as well as a transcript available on FPNTC.org next week. The resources related to adoption and options counseling, again, can be found in the pregnancy testing and counseling training package on our website. And, when you log off today you're going to be prompted to complete a very brief evaluation and we would encourage you to complete that, we really value your thoughts and we do use your feedback for quality improvement here.

So, thank you all for joining us today and that concludes today's webinar.