

A Guide to All of Your Pregnancy & Adoption Options

 Adoptions
with Love, Inc.



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Option 1: Birthing and Parenting	2-3
Option 2: Terminating the Pregnancy	4
Option 3: Making an Adoption Plan	5-6
Pregnancy Care & Considerations	7
Phone a Friend.....	8
Adoption Options	9
Choosing a Family	
Open Adoption	
Closed Adoption	
Semi-Open Adoption	
Questions to Ask When Facing an Unplanned Pregnancy	10
Finding the Support You Need	11
Adoption Agency Services & Support.....	12





Introduction

Unplanned pregnancy can be a scary, confusing, and overwhelming time in a woman's life. Not only can it lead to many questions and big decisions, it can also lead to feelings of isolation for many expectant mothers. It is important to know that you are not alone. In fact, most pregnancies in the United States today are unintended. You may not have planned to have this baby, but it is not too late to start planning for the baby. Whether you just found out you are pregnant, are in your third trimester, or have already given birth, Adoptions With Love is here for you.

As an expectant mother, you have many options when it comes to your pregnancy. You can terminate the pregnancy, parent your baby, or make an adoption plan – we will get into each of these options shortly. Whatever you decide, the choice should be yours and yours alone. No one should pressure you into a decision with which you are uncomfortable. This is why a good support system is so important. For anyone considering adoption, a reliable adoption agency is imperative. Compassionate and expert adoption agencies, like Adoptions With Love, provide unbiased support and judgement-free, pressure-free guidance for expectant/birth mothers throughout pregnancy and beyond.

This guide will examine each option for women facing an unplanned pregnancy. It can serve as an overall look at the options you have as an expectant mother, and also offer options for those women who have already given birth. You can rest assured that this guide will provide you with the information you need to make an informed decision for you and your baby – Things you might not have considered before finding yourself in this position; Options you might not have known are available to you.

For example, did you know that adoption is an option? About one-fourth of young women who are pregnant and under 19 choose adoption for their babies. Many of these women also choose to keep in touch with their child and adoptive family over the years, through the open adoption choice.

Women facing unplanned pregnancy should also be aware of the importance of their health during this time. No matter your decision, you should understand the care and physical demands of pregnancy and giving birth. In this guide, we will cover these important topics to help prepare you for what may come.



Option 1: Birthing and Parenting

When facing an unplanned pregnancy, one of the first options an expectant mother will consider is parenting. Right now, you may be thinking about raising your child, but are unsure if you are actually ready to become a parent. It is okay if you are not.

Parenthood is a lifelong commitment that goes well-beyond the baby years. Choosing to become a parent means you are responsible for your child 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for the next 20-plus years of his or her life. For most women, having a child to care for is a major life change. In the short-term, this could mean pressing pause on school, or setting aside social engagements until your child is grown. Long-term, this could mean putting your education, career, relationships, or life goals on hold. The reward of parenting can certainly feel well-worth the shift in plans, but it is something to carefully consider. Are you okay with making these types of changes in your life?

Another factor to consider is childcare: Who, if anyone, will help you raise this child? Depending on your family circumstances, you may be single-parenting without a partner. Perhaps you have a relationship with the father, but he does not wish to be involved. Perhaps your family has offered to lend some support. Maybe you are already raising children, and are unsure if you can care for another, as well. Babies need 24-hour watchful care, and as a parent, this will become your full-time job. If you must balance this with other obligations, you will need to have a plan in place so that your baby is safe.

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Parenting Your Child

Parenting is a life-long commitment. It is okay if you are not ready to take on that responsibility.



Option 1: Birthing and Parenting (con't)

If you are considering parenting your child, it is also important to think about your financial situation, both now and in the future. Are you able to support yourself and a child, for the next 20 years of life? According to national statistics, the average cost of raising a child from birth to age 18 is \$233,610. This does not include a college education.

Parents need to fulfill the basic needs of their children, ensuring they are healthy, fed, clothed, and kept out of harm's way. If you are considering parenthood, be sure that you can meet your child's medical needs as he or she grows, and that you can provide the nutritious meals and unwavering security that he or she deserves. Diapers alone typically cost \$550 a year. If you will require childcare, keep in mind that full-time daycare can cost between \$5,000 and \$16,000 per year – or, on average, over \$200 per week. While some financial assistance is available, only one-third of single mothers receive child support.

Parenting is, without a doubt, a rewarding decision. It is also an exhausting one. A baby does not care if you are sleepy, feel like “calling in sick,” or just want some alone time. Before deciding to become a parent, you must first ask yourself if you are truly ready for that commitment.

Perhaps you feel in your heart that parenting is the decision for you. You can always start planning now. But perhaps you are not ready – emotionally or financially – to raise a child right now. Maybe you still need time to think it over. Fortunately, you have a lot of time to think about this option. Sometimes, speaking with family members or a professional social worker can help with weighing all the practicalities of finances and childcare.

At the end of the day, however, parenting is a decision that you must come to on your own. If you believe you can love, care for, and fulfill all the needs of your child at this time, then you may be ready to parent your baby. If you decide you are not prepared to raise a child at this time, remember that you still have other options.



Option 2: Terminating the Pregnancy

If you know that you are not yet ready – or in the position – to become a parent, or if you do not feel up to carrying a child to term, you may be considering abortion. It is generally performed within the first 24 weeks of the pregnancy.

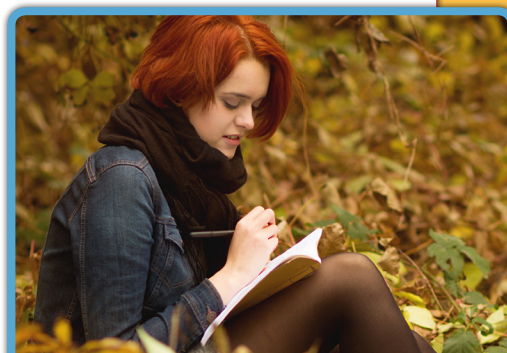
There are two methods for terminating a pregnancy: in-clinic abortion and medication abortion. Both of these methods are common among women facing an unplanned pregnancy. In fact, one in four women in the United States have an abortion by the age of 45.

Medication abortion, also known as the “abortion pill,” is prescribed by a trained doctor to end a pregnancy. This option is only possible if taken within the first 10 weeks of pregnancy. The sooner it is taken, the more effective it is. Some women choose this path to be able to end the pregnancy right away, in the privacy of their own home.

An in-clinic abortion, also called “surgical abortion,” is performed by a trained doctor or nurse at a healthcare facility. Some choose this method because it is done in one visit and effective; an in-clinic procedure takes 5-10 minutes, while the abortion pill can take up to 24 hours. It also gives some women peace of mind knowing a trained professional is performing the procedure. As noted by Planned Parenthood, in-clinic abortions can be performed up to 16 weeks after your last period. However, abortion laws vary by state and some states only allow abortion up to 12 weeks of pregnancy.

Choosing to have an abortion is a personal decision. By no means should anyone try to pressure you into it. This is your pregnancy and 100% your choice. Yet many women are led to feel like abortion is the only choice. This is not true. If you are not ready to become a parent, but are not comfortable with terminating your pregnancy, there are other options.

Women choose to end pregnancy via abortion for a variety of reasons. Some are victims of sexual assault. Others just do not feel ready to carry a child to term or experience pregnancy. If you are considering abortion, it is very important to speak with your doctor or a trained professional at a health center, such as Planned Parenthood, for more information.



This is Your Decision

This is your pregnancy.
You should never feel pressured
into making a certain choice.
It is a personal decision.



Option 3: Making an Adoption Plan

Adoption is a positive option for expectant and birth mothers who are not ready to parent, but also not wanting or able to terminate the pregnancy. Each year, 14,000 women in the United States consider placing their babies for adoption. Approximately one-third of women with an unplanned pregnancy want to learn more about the adoption choice.

Despite what you may have heard or seen on TV, adoption today is a very loving, thoughtful choice. It is not secretive or guarded like it once was. Today, most children who were adopted know about their adoption story. Many of these children also know or are in contact with their birth mother. This is possible through open adoption.

Open adoption – something offered by 95 percent of U.S. adoption agencies today, including Adoptions With Love – means that birth mothers have ongoing communication with their child's adoptive family. The frequency and form of contact is different for everyone. For one birth mother, this could mean receiving a letter and photo update of her child each year. For others, it could mean an occasional phone call, email, or even scheduled, in-person visits. Some adoptive families form close bonds with their child's birth mother, and choose to meet regularly or on special occasions. This concept of openness gives birth mothers peace of mind in making an adoption plan. In fact, two-thirds of birth mothers in open adoptions today feel certain they would make the same decision again.

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Considering Adoption

Approximately one-third of women with an unplanned pregnancy want to learn more about the adoption choice.



Option 3: Making an Adoption Plan (cont)

Another positive aspect of adoption is that expectant/birth mothers today have the opportunity to choose the adoptive family for their baby. This means you can select the family of your dreams for your child, giving him or her the best possible life you can give at this time. If you choose to make an adoption plan with Adoptions With Love, you will be able to hand-pick the family to love and raise your child.

It may bring a birth mother comfort knowing that her child would be well cared-for with an adoptive family. Adopted children are more likely to be sung to and read stories to every day. An estimated 85 percent of adopted children are reportedly in excellent health. The majority are being raised by two loving parents. At Adoptions With Love, we ensure each child is placed in a safe, stable, and secure home.

Placing your baby for adoption is a decision that requires great consideration and selflessness. It is one of the most loving, yet most emotional and difficult decisions, you will make in your lifetime. A reputable and compassionate adoption agency can help you navigate the adoption process, but it is a choice that you must come to on your own, without any pressure or judgment. Only you know what is best for you and your baby.



You Choose the Outcome

Have comfort in choosing your baby's adoptive family.
Place your baby in a safe, stable, and secure home.



Pregnancy Care & Considerations

Before making any decisions regarding your pregnancy, it is important to take your time to reflect on all of your options. There is no rush to make a decision. However, some options, such as abortion, have certain timelines involved. The choice to terminate is only possible for a short window of time. With adoption or parenting, it is never too late in your pregnancy to decide. If you are considering adoption, you do not have to make a decision until after the birth of your baby.

If you are choosing between parenthood and adoption, try to imagine your life in five (and ten) years. Are you working full time, or going to school? Do you see yourself living in your own house or apartment? Do you have a child (or children) with you? Are you stable, emotionally and financially? Take time to consider the more realistic aspects of parenting: From morning and bedtime routines, to childcare during the day, to feedings and doctor's appointments. Think about how you might handle everyday stressors and decisions. Remember, parenting is rewarding, but it goes beyond the younger years. Children grow, and need more as they do. Parenting means it will not just be about you anymore; a growing baby will rely on you for everything, at every moment. Adoption means someone else – a family of your choosing, who has and is prepared to parent – will raise your baby in a safe, stable, and loving home.

Should you consider parenting or placing your child for adoption, it is important to think about your pregnancy and postpartum recovery. How much time off can you take from work? Is there someone in you can rely on to take you to and from the hospital? If you are parenting, how will you cover any uninsured medical costs? (With adoption, these expenses are typically covered by your agency.)

If you choose to parent or make an adoption plan, it is important to take care of your health during and after pregnancy. It is not enough to take an at-home pregnancy test. As soon as you suspect you are pregnant, make an appointment with a doctor or at a healthcare clinic to confirm the pregnancy. Upon confirming the pregnancy at the doctor's office, it is important to begin prenatal care and get any needed STD testing. The sooner a woman begins prenatal care, the healthier she and her baby will be.



Phone a Friend

While you process the news of your pregnancy, remember that you do have choices. Whichever path you choose, know that there is always help for you. Any expectant/birth mother deserves a great support system. It is up to you decide who you will share this news with – whether you have a significant other, a close-knit family, or caring friends – if anyone at all. Keep in mind that a good support system is always able to listen to you, without judgment or pressure. You should feel comfortable confiding in this person(s).

Many expectant/birth mothers feel scared to share pregnancy news with family, in fear of a negative reaction and pressure to make a certain decision. Should you find yourself in this position, it is important to find a professional with whom to speak. Anyone considering adoption (even if you have not made a decision) may turn to an adoption agency like Adoptions With Love for support. Our caring staff is available to chat 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We offer counseling services – free of charge – that are unbiased and completely free of pressure. No matter your choice, we are here for you.

In addition to free counseling services, Adoptions With Love offers free legal counseling. Our trained attorneys are well-versed in the parental rights and adoption process. Should you choose to place your baby for adoption, you can rest assured that you will get the information you need to help you along in the adoption journey. Together, we can help you make a custom adoption plan for you and your baby.

Whoever you lean on, however, you are the one who will ultimately know what is best. No one should pressure you or make you feel bad about your decision. You have options. This is your choice.



Talk Through your Choices

Talk about your pregnancy with family, friends, and a professional. Our caring staff is here 24/7 as a positive resource.



Adoption Options

Not only is adoption a positive choice for expectant/birth parents, there are also several more choices women can have in making an adoption plan. The first is the power to choose a family for your baby. You can also choose the type of adoption plan, or amount of contact, you would like to have with the adoptive family. To help you make the right choice, we have outlined the most common adoption options for expectant/birth mothers below.

Choosing a Family

At an open adoption agency like Adoptions With Love, expectant/birth mothers can view profiles from waiting adoptive family, and hand-select the parents to raise and love their baby. This is a reassuring and comforting option for expectant/birth mothers to have if they are not ready to parent themselves.

Open Adoption

While there are many different forms of open adoption, open adoption simply means there is some sort of relationship between a birth parent and her child's adoptive family. Depending on the plan you choose, this may involve email conversations, text messages, phone calls, video chats, letters and pictures, or even in-person visits. Most adoptive families today are now open to some ongoing communication with the birth parents over the years.

Closed Adoption

A closed adoption plan means there is no contact between birth families and adoptive families, which gives expectant/birth mothers more privacy throughout the process. Parents are usually kept anonymous, meaning little to no identifying information is shared between families, even before the birth takes place. While only about five percent of adoptions today are completely closed, some birth mothers are not ready to have an ongoing relationship with their child and therefore choose this path.

Semi-Open Adoption

Just as it sounds, a semi-open adoption falls somewhere in between an open and a closed adoption, involving some, but less communication with the adoptive family. It usually involves the exchange of letters and pictures through an adoption agency, without the direct contact. The children involved don't normally have any direct contact with their birth parents. At Adoptions With Love, all adoptive families agree to at least a semi-open adoption, and commit to sharing letters and pictures with their birth parents on a regular basis.



Questions to Ask When Facing an Unplanned Pregnancy

No matter which decision you make for you and your baby, know that your life will change. That is why it is important to take all the time you need to weigh your options, learn about your choices, and determine the best one for you. Ultimately, it is important that you are comfortable with your choice. Ask yourself, what is in your best interest, and what is in the best interest of your baby?

Take stock in your own feelings. Write down your concerns, fears, thoughts, and questions regarding your pregnancy options. Read through our list of questions and think about each of your answers. Fully understanding your needs, goals, and circumstances will be invaluable in making a decision.

Parenting

- Am I ready to put a child's needs before my own?
- Am I financially prepared to raise a child?
- Will I have support (financial and emotional) from the baby's father? Can I count on him?
- Can family members help me financially, or with child care? Can I count on them?
- How can I reach my long-term goals in order to improve my child's life, as well as my own?

Adoption

- What kind of life do I want for my child?
- What kind of family would I like my child to have?
- How much ongoing contact would I want with my adoptive family/child?
- What would I like my child to know about me?
- Who can I lean on for support through the adoption journey and beyond?
- Is there anyone who I can speak with who has made an adoption plan?

Abortion

- Am I well-informed on the procedure?
- Do I feel pressured to have an abortion?
- How will I feel, emotionally, after the procedure?
- What are the laws in my state regarding abortion?
- Is there anyone in my life who has had an abortion with whom I could speak?

After asking yourself these important questions, think about which choice stands out as the most realistic and comfortable decision for you. Remember that you are in charge here, and that no one else in your life can make this choice for you.



Finding the Support You Need

When you are facing an unplanned pregnancy, it is easy to feel like you are alone. After all, who can understand your situation? Who can be a true shoulder to lean on? Who can you trust will truly care about what happens with you and your baby? It is helpful to find someone who has been in your shoes, and who has had to make the same decision that you are facing now. For these reasons, a support group is a great place to start. Talking to other women who have faced an unplanned pregnancy can be a valuable tool. You can learn about their experience and how they came to their decisions.

Once you have made your choice, these women can relate to you in a way that even your supportive family members and friends cannot. There are groups for pregnant women, groups for women at various points of the adoption journey, groups for teen birth mothers, and even groups for those recovering from abortion.

In addition to the many support groups available, there are also many kinds of counseling centers that can be helpful. These centers offer unplanned pregnancy counseling, and can help you find professionals who offer specific services, such as adoption agencies, abortion clinics, or parenting centers. Whether you choose parenting, abortion, or adoption, it can be helpful to gain this much-needed support, build your network, and also ensure yourself that you are making the right choice for you.

Keep in mind that adoption agencies like Adoptions With Love are equipped with a team of licensed experienced social workers who can advise you on your options. You will never be pressured to make an adoption plan. The role of an adoption agency counselor is to educate expectant/birth mothers on their options, and guide them in making the best possible, most comfortable choice. If you choose adoption, your agency can walk you through the pregnancy, birth, and placement process, but will be there for you in the many years to come. While it may seem that the counseling and placement is all there is to it, an adoption agency can help with so much more.



You Are Not Alone

Even if you are unsure what to do, AWL is here to help you learn about your options. We will respect any choice you make.



Adoption Agency Services & Support

Pregnancy and postpartum recovery are emotional experiences. Placing your baby for adoption can bring about an array of emotions. No birth mother should ever feel alone in this journey. Adoptions With Love offers support 24-hours a day, seven days a week even after your baby is placed.

Adoptions With Love can help meet both your emotional and physical needs throughout the adoption process. If you do not have a great doctor with whom you feel comfortable, a social worker can help find one for you. We will also help you cover any uninsured medical expenses, from prenatal care to postpartum recovery.

In addition to medical coverage, we can also help assist you with your finances in pregnancy. For example, Adoptions With Love can cover a security deposit and several months of rent. We can also provide financial assistance with maternity clothing, utilities, phone and other bills, as needed. We do not want you to feel overwhelmed by the added stress of housing or income.

Adoptions With Love wants to ensure that all expectant/birth mothers are at ease throughout the pregnancy and adoption journey. There is never any pressure or judgment involved. We will work with you to help find the perfect family for your baby, make an adoption plan with which you are comfortable, and even provide you legal, financial, and emotional support as needed along the way.

If you are considering making an adoption plan, do not hesitate to reach out to Adoptions With Love. Remember, you always have options at any point in your pregnancy and even after you have already given birth. We are here for you.

Call Adoptions With Love toll-free at **1-800-722-7731** or **text us confidentially at 617-777-0072** for more information on making an adoption plan.



We Are Here for You 24/7

Adoptions With Love is available anytime of day, any day of the week to answer your call. Call us toll-free at 800-722-7731.