

What to Expect

If you choose to explore adoption with FIA, you can expect to...

- Have your privacy and confidentiality maintained.
- Have FIA's kind and experienced staff available to support you 24 hours a day, without putting any pressure on you.
- Be offered free, face-to-face, local counseling services for you and your family, both prior to and after the birth of your baby.
- Feel comfortable speaking honestly throughout the process, without fear of being judged.
- Have access to free legal services and be offered help with medical and living expenses, as the law allows.
- Be treated with kindness, dignity and respect as you explore the adoption option.
- Learn about the choices you have in creating an adoption plan that fits you and your needs, including how much contact you want, both before and after your child's birth.
- Have FIA personally know its families! FIA makes it a priority to meet all of its families in person before approving them to adopt.
- Have all FIA families be financially secure and pre-screened thoroughly through the home study process, which includes physicals and emotional health reports by a physician, as well as child abuse and criminal clearances. In addition, FIA families must update their home study yearly.
- Have prompt, confidential delivery of helpful materials and resources upon request, and expect FIA to value your privacy and strive to maintain strict confidentiality when providing services to you free of charge.
- Be offered the opportunity to talk with, email, or in some cases, meet with birth parents who believe that every person considering adoption should be able to hear from others who are living the experience.
- Have the agency available for continued contact throughout the years, even if you choose not to have direct contact with the adoptive family.

You deserve kindness and respect from our caring staff.
We are here for you 24 hours a day.



Friends in Adoption

A not-for-profit corporation.

1-800-98-ADOPT (1-800-982.3678)

www.friendsinadoption.org

VERMONT 44 South Street, P.O. Box 1228, Middletown Springs, VT 05757 • 1-800-98ADOPT/1-800-982-3678 • Fax: 1-802-235-2311
NEW YORK 653 Plank Rd., Suite 200, Clifton Park, NY 12065 • 1-800-844-3630 • Fax: 1-518-371-9936
OTHER LOCATIONS VT Essex Junction NY Athens • Baldwinville • Northville • Rochester PA Doylestown

Thinking about Adoption?



Being pregnant and unsure of what to do may be confusing and lonely. You may feel like you are the only one in this position, and you don't know where to turn. You want someone to talk to who has all the facts, but won't tell you what decision to make.



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Holly's Story

When *I first found out I was pregnant, I didn't tell anyone except the baby's father. He said many insulting things to me and then told me to get an abortion, which I was not going to do. So, I dug myself a hole, wore big, baggy clothes and denied that this was happening to me.*

I was 16 years old and worried about what my friends, family and small town community would think. So many thoughts were on my mind. Would my parents kick me out? Would I be able to finish high school? Would I be able to go to college as I had always planned? What would happen to my baby and me?

When I told my Mom in my seventh month, she was surprisingly supportive and we cried together as she kept telling me that we would get through this. My Mom had a friend whose daughter placed her child for adoption a few years back with the help of Friends In Adoption, so my Mom called them. I remember my Mom hanging up the phone with tears in her eyes telling me that Friends In Adoption would be able to answer all our questions about what to do about the birth father since he wasn't cooperating and what kind of contact we could have with the adoptive family. FIA connected us to an adoption attorney in our area and a counselor. (I knew I couldn't get through this without some counseling.)

We were happy to learn that we could pick the adoptive family and chose someone who was similar to our own family. We spoke to them on the phone and met with them twice before the baby was born. I finally got pre-natal care and would speak to them after my doctor's appointments. The relationship we developed was built on respect and gratitude on both of our parts. They were an answer to my prayers and I was an answer to theirs. By the time my son was born, his adoptive parents felt like part of my extended family. With the help of my son's adoptive parents, I realized that I had nothing to be ashamed of—he was a beautiful baby boy and I was so proud!

The day I left the hospital and drove away without him was the most difficult day of my life. Despite that, I don't regret anything. My son has a loving and stable home with every opportunity imaginable. Even though I would have done anything to give my son a great life, I didn't have the financial resources, the maturity or time to give him the life he now has. I receive frequent letters and pictures from my son's parents, visit with him once or twice a year, write poems to him and write about him in my journal.

Deep down inside, I know I made the right decision. Through my experience, I grew up in so many ways and learned that an unfortunate situation can be turned into something much more positive. The future looks pretty fantastic for both my son and me.

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Sara's Story

After *struggling financially and emotionally for many years to raise my daughter, I was finally in a good place. I had gotten my GED and had a job that would actually support my daughter and I. Although money was tight and I had little time for myself, I was hanging in there. Then, I found out I was pregnant. It felt like some cruel joke!*

I was numb for awhile. Since I already had a previous abortion, I was unwilling to have another. The baby's father was a nice enough guy but not father material. I knew I couldn't raise another child on my own at this time. I knew firsthand how hard it was—the sleepless nights, endless feedings and diapers, the constant worry when your child is sick and, of course, always worrying about money. I started to wonder if adoption was my answer.

I wasn't ready to talk about my pregnancy with my family until I figured out what I wanted to do. I opened the yellow pages to an ad for an adoption agency called Friends In Adoption that talked about kindness and respect.



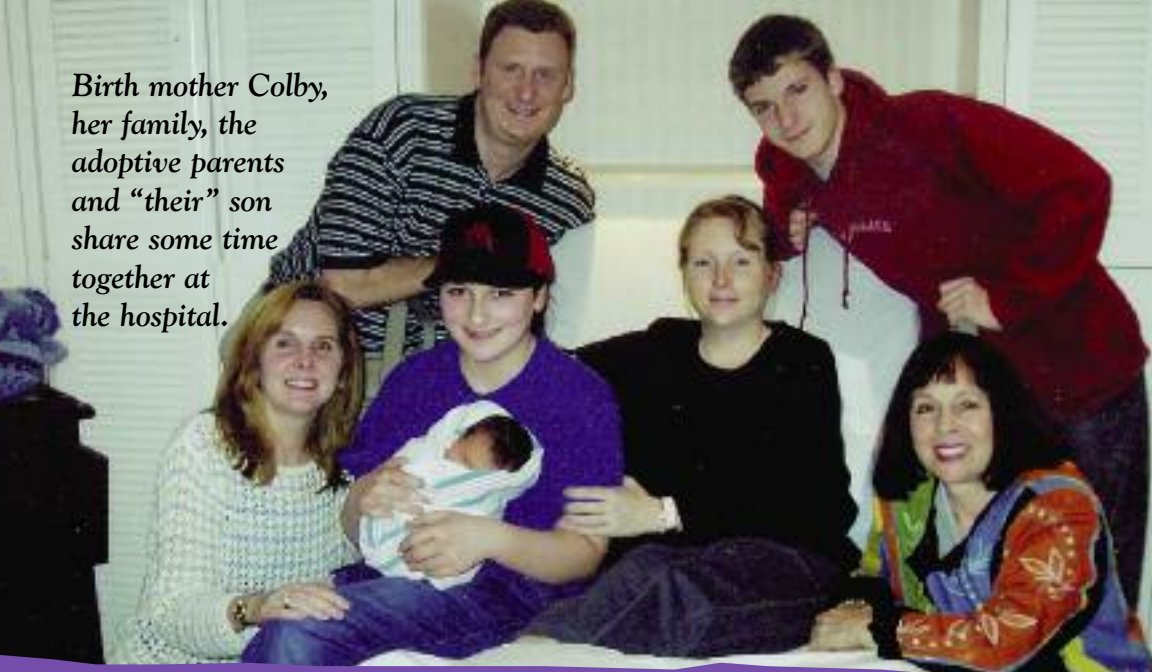
I thought I could use a little of that! I called two or three times before I got the nerve not to hang up. The person on the other end of the phone was kind and caring and asked about my story. I started crying and the woman just patiently waited and listened until I calmed down enough to talk. She sent me some information about adoption and some booklets with pictures and information about the families that were waiting to adopt. She also sent me a book that I could

read to my daughter about why I was choosing adoption. She assured me that none of what I was doing meant I was definitely committed to placing my child for adoption because I couldn't sign the final papers until after my baby was born.

I chose a family with an adorable two-year old son. Since I always wanted a big brother when I was growing up, I decided to give that to my unborn child. I talked to the adoptive mom to see if they were the family for me and we hit it off right away. We talked on the phone every so often—I was busy working, taking care of my daughter and going to doctor's appointments. The case worker at Friends in Adoption also helped me figure out how to explain to my family that I was choosing adoption for my baby and how to deal with the baby's father. It wasn't easy.

Since the baby was breech, I was scheduled for a C-section. But my daughter had a mind of her own and was born two days before. The adoptive parents got here as fast as they could, but they had a long drive. I couldn't wait to actually meet them and find out the name they had chosen for our daughter. We all spent time at the hospital with the baby before it was time to sign the papers and to leave the hospital. It was the toughest thing I ever did but it was made a little easier knowing that my daughter now had two loving parents, a big brother, many grandparents, aunts and uncles and cousins and a life I could only dream of for her. I also know her adoptive parents will tell her about me and her sister and remind her how much I loved her when I made this decision, and that I will always love her. I was also thrilled that I would get letters and pictures from the adoptive parents twice a year so that I would always know that my precious baby girl was safe, happy and loved.

Birth mother Colby, her family, the adoptive parents and "their" son share some time together at the hospital.



What Choices Do I Have In Adoption?

Adoption has changed a great deal in the last few years. In the past, there were very few choices for women considering adoption. Today, if you decide on adoption, you and the adoptive family will reach the decisions that makes your adoption plan unique and personal. Every adoption plan is different. The plan will be defined as yours by the choices you make. The goal of our counselors is not to pressure you into making an adoption plan, but rather to help you sort through your feelings and options, without influencing you in any way. The types of decisions that you will need to make are as follows:

- Do I need more information about adoption?
- Do I want to meet with an FIA staff member to learn more about the option of adoption?
- If you decide to make an adoption plan, you may want to consider the following:
 - Do I want to share my pregnancy and potential adoption plan for my baby with my family and/or friends or do I want to keep it completely confidential?
 - Do I want to choose my child's adoptive family? If so, what type of adoptive family do I prefer for my child (e.g., a certain race, religion, a family who is parenting other children or a family who isn't)?
 - Do I want to speak with or meet my child's prospective adoptive family before the baby is born?
 - Do I want the prospective adoptive family involved during the pregnancy?
 - Do I want to spend time with the baby at the hospital and do I want the prospective adoptive family to do the same?
 - Do I want information about my child as he/she grows? If so, what form do I want this information to take (letters and pictures, occasional visits, email, etc.)?

What Are My Legal Rights In Adoption?

Although we would encourage you to be fully informed about your legal rights before your child is born, you can't sign any legal documents until after the baby's birth. At that time, if you still want to move forward with your adoption plan, arrangements will be made for you to sign the legal papers.

There are many preliminary steps you might take to help you decide if making an adoption plan is right for you and your baby. You may talk with an agency staff member, review profiles and/or talk with prospective adoptive families, provide a medical release in order to allow the agency to obtain your pre-natal records, provide medical, social, and family history and/or receive counseling on how to deal with your pregnancy.

None of these beginning steps results in the placement of your child for adoption. Before signing any legal documents placing your child for adoption, you will receive the following confidential services, at no cost to you:

- Options and supportive counseling by qualified professionals.
- Legal representation to ensure that you understand your legal rights before you sign the adoption papers.
- An assessment of the biological father's rights and whether he must receive notice of the adoption and/or consent to it, so that the adoption can be secure for you and your child.
- Contact with birth parents for support.
- Profiles of prospective adoptive families, whose backgrounds have been carefully assessed and whose emotional and financial stability has been thoroughly reviewed.
- If you don't have private medical insurance or Medicaid coverage, referrals to state/federal organizations in order for you to apply for programs that will provide you with the medical coverage that you need.
- Financial assistance for legally-allowable pregnancy and birth-related expenses including medical bills (if you are not eligible for state/federal assistance).
- Knowledge that, if your baby is not born healthy, you will receive support from FIA, twenty-four hours a day, and a family for your child who is ready, willing, and capable of parenting a health-impaired or special needs child.
- Knowledge that FIA is creating families forever and that you, as an important part of FIA's forever family, have our commitment to be here for you forever.

What Is The Next Step For Me?

If, after reading this informational brochure, you decide that you still want to continue making an adoption plan, you will be assigned an FIA case worker. The case worker will explain the choices you have and what is needed from you in order to move forward with your plan. These may include:

- Authorizing the release of pre-natal records and the baby's medical records.
- Supplying FIA with social and medical history.
- Participating in options and supportive counseling.
- Obtaining pre-natal care and, if eligible, to apply for medical coverage to cover the bill.
- Keeping FIA updated as to how we can reach you.

Because FIA's commitment to you is for a lifetime, it does not end with the birth of your baby. If you decide to follow through with your adoption plan, we support everyone involved. You can help with this by keeping in touch with FIA and letting us know how you are doing and by informing FIA of any illness or hereditary conditions that develop in the future.



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