

High School Presentation on Open Adoption

Do your students know about adoption? Adoption has changed significantly over the past 20 years. However, it remains a topic that is rarely discussed. Since adoption has been surrounded by shame and secrecy for decades, as a culture we haven't created a source of current or accurate information about adoption. As a result, your students probably hold a lot of stereotypes and misconceptions regarding adoption. **We would like to change that!**

Open Adoption & Family Services (OA&FS) is a progressive, nonprofit agency. As a non-religiously affiliated agency, we provide all-options pregnancy counseling. Since our inception in 1985, we have completed over 1,000 open adoptions and have become the experts on open adoption in the northwest.

We would welcome the opportunity to come to your classroom and present on the following topics:

- What is open adoption? How has adoption changed?
- What are the stereotypes and misconceptions people have about adoption? Complete an interactive activity in which students respond to statements about adoption with a "strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree" response. Discuss these beliefs.
- How are these misconceptions perpetuated? Discuss the role of the media and the negative language typically used to describe adoption.
- How prevalent is adoption? Review statistics. What are the types of adoption a teen may encounter? Discuss the differences between the DHS termination process and voluntary open adoption.
- Discuss the open adoption process in which pregnant teens are empowered to hand-select the adoptive family, form a relationship with them and create a legally-enforceable contract for ongoing visits. Discuss the father's role in the adoption.

- **Group activity** – exploring adoption questions. Discuss follow each question.
 1. A friend of yours is pregnant (or has a partner who's pregnant). This person comes to you and says that they are planning an adoption. What concerns or fears do you have for them or for the child?
 2. What are some of the hopeful or positive things about this plan?
 3. Think about a story you heard in the news, or saw on TV or a movie that had to do with adoption. Was adoption portrayed positively?
 4. Do you know someone who is adopted? How have they influenced your thoughts on adoption? How about someone who has planned an adoption?

- **Hearing stories** –
 1. A birthmom who planned an adoption as a teen can share her story.
 2. We also have a DVD of a birthparents story and one of a panel of teen adoptees who answer questions about their open adoptions.

"Thank you so much for coming into my classroom and informing my students about open adoption. It resulted in a number of related discussions and several persuasive speeches on the topic. Your presentation obviously had an impact. Thanks again, and I hope to see you again next year."

High School Teacher