

Talking to Teens about Adoption

Common barriers to teens considering adoption as an option

- ❖ Strong personal feelings toward wanting to parent
- ❖ Peers/family unsupportive of a person choosing adoption
- ❖ Misperceptions about adoption – these are numerous, but here are a few:
 - Adoption is abandoning the child
 - Adoption strongly associated with people’s experiences of state/public adoptions (DHS)
 - Families are matched, rather than birthparent choosing a family
 - Level of openness is up to the adoptive parents
 - Visits are supervised
- ❖ Apprehension about feelings of loss with an adoption
- ❖ Apprehension about how the adopted child would feel about being adopted
- ❖ Developmental stage that makes it hard to see long-term consequences/realities of decisions

Ideas to address these barriers

- ❖ Provide opportunity to explore pregnancy options, normalizing decision making process
 - Include feelings and knowledge about each option, experiences around each, and how teen “knows” an option is not right
 - Note that the more time spent gathering information and processing, the better people feel about their decision (whatever the decision is)
- ❖ Reiterate your support of what teen believes is the right choice for them
- ❖ Explore how the views of family/friends are influencing decision
- ❖ Address misperceptions about adoption
- ❖ Identify the differences between DHS adoptions and agency or private adoptions
- ❖ Educate about openness, noting the focus on relationship
- ❖ If teen was in foster care, explore how this has impacted their view of adoption
- ❖ When appropriate, explore prioritizing options, i.e. “the backup plan”