

UNDERSTANDING OPEN ADOPTION



Webinar Training for Reproductive Health
Program Service Providers



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



About Open Adoption & Family Services

- Non-profit agency since 1985.
- Completed over 1,500 adoptions.
- Strong commitment to openness and ethics in adoption.
- Provide all-options counseling and open adoption services nationwide.
- Pro-choice with a reproductive justice lens.
- Not religiously affiliated.
- Our Board of Directors is led by birth parents.



**OPEN ADOPTION
& FAMILY SERVICES**
1-800-772-1115 [OPENADOPT.ORG](https://openadopt.org)



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Objectives

We'll learn about:

- The era of closed adoption.
- The current era of open adoption.
- What a child-centered open adoption looks like.
- The benefits of openness in adoption.
- Best practices in adoption.



Adoption Sensitive Language

DISEMPOWERING

Giving Your
Child Away

Putting Your
Child Up For
Adoption

Real Child

Not the Real
Parents

Keeping
the Child

VS. EMPOWERING

Planning an
Adoption for
Your Child

Choosing an
Adoptive Family
for Your Child

Child

Adoptive Parent,
Parent

Deciding to
Parent, Parenting



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Different Types of Adoption

Private Agency



Attorney/Independent

Foster Care & State Adoption



International



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



The Era of Closed Adoption



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



The Impact of Closed Adoption

- Grief over the loss of a relationship with birth parents and birth family.
- Grief over disconnection from culture and heritage.
- Loss of access to important medical information and family history.
- Self-esteem and identity development issues.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



The Era of Open Adoption



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



High Integrity Open Adoption

- Ongoing contact is not seen as a concession, but is viewed as beneficial to everyone involved – especially the child.
- The parties value one another's unique role in the child's life.
- The child feels unconditional acceptance of their full identity and has access to the constellation of people that love them.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Each Open
Adoption
Relationship
is Unique.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Benefits of Open Adoption

For the Child

- Healthier sense of identity and self-esteem.
- Direct access to information and support from birth family.
- Talking about adoption is welcome.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Benefits of Open Adoption

For Birth Parents

- Agency in the adoption planning process and their child's future.
- Able to express their love for their child.
- Birth parents see firsthand how their child is doing.
- They feel honored and validated as birth parent.
- Able to integrate the role of birth parent into their identity and their life.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Benefits of Open Adoption

For Adoptive Parents

- Adoptive parents are chosen by birthparents – empowered, honored.
- Access to answers to their child's questions.
- Better equipped to help their child develop a healthy sense of identity.
- Know their child more fully.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Trauma is Present in Adoption

- Trauma and loss are a part of adoption.
- This includes cultural trauma.
- How to bring a trauma-informed lens to adoption.



Adoptive
Parents



Birth
Parents

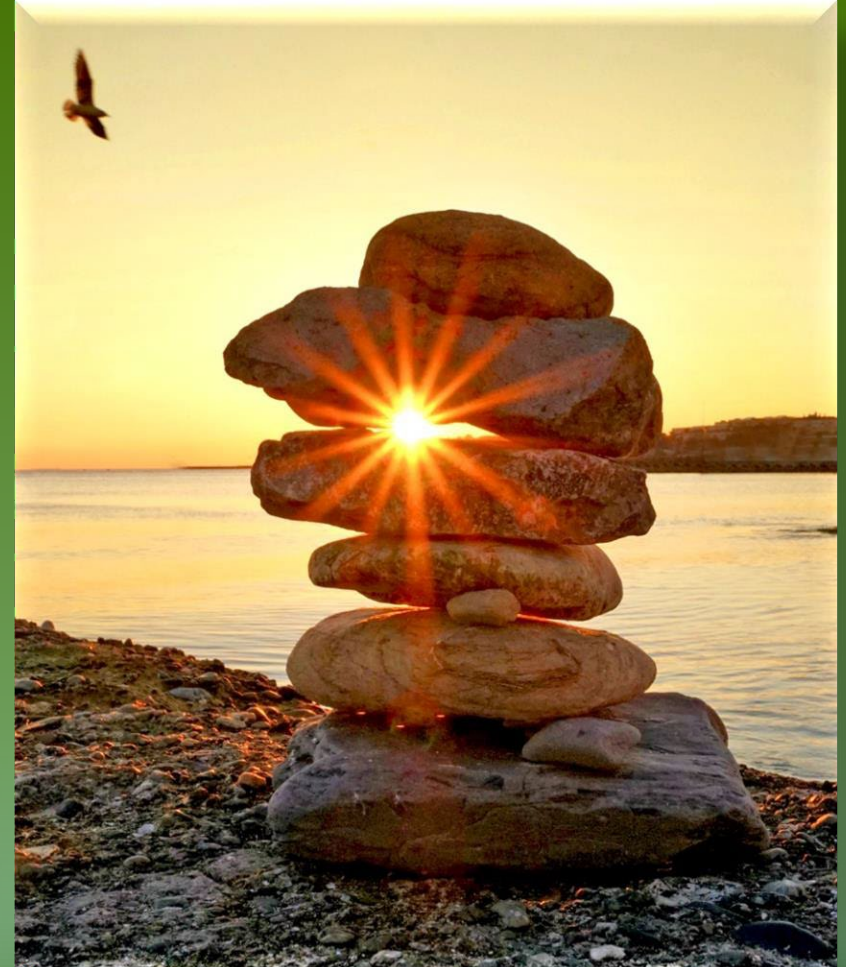


Adopted
People



Best Practices in Open Adoption

- Unbiased all-options pregnancy counseling.
- Envisioning the open adoption relationship.
- Choosing an adoptive family.
- Support in building the open adoption relationship.
- Involvement of both birth parents.
- Ongoing post-adoption services.
- Listening to those with lived experience.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Unbiased All-Options Pregnancy Counseling

- Establish neutral and non-judgmental environment.
- Avoid assumptions about what options are being considered.
- Provide accurate information.
- Connect client with resources and referrals.
- Assess client support systems.
- Explore grief and loss.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Engaging Expectant Fathers

- Fathers are equally valued.
- Create a welcoming, supportive non-judgmental space.

When the choice is adoption:

- They are empowered to explore their role in the adoption planning process.
- There's space to create their own distinct open adoption relationship.



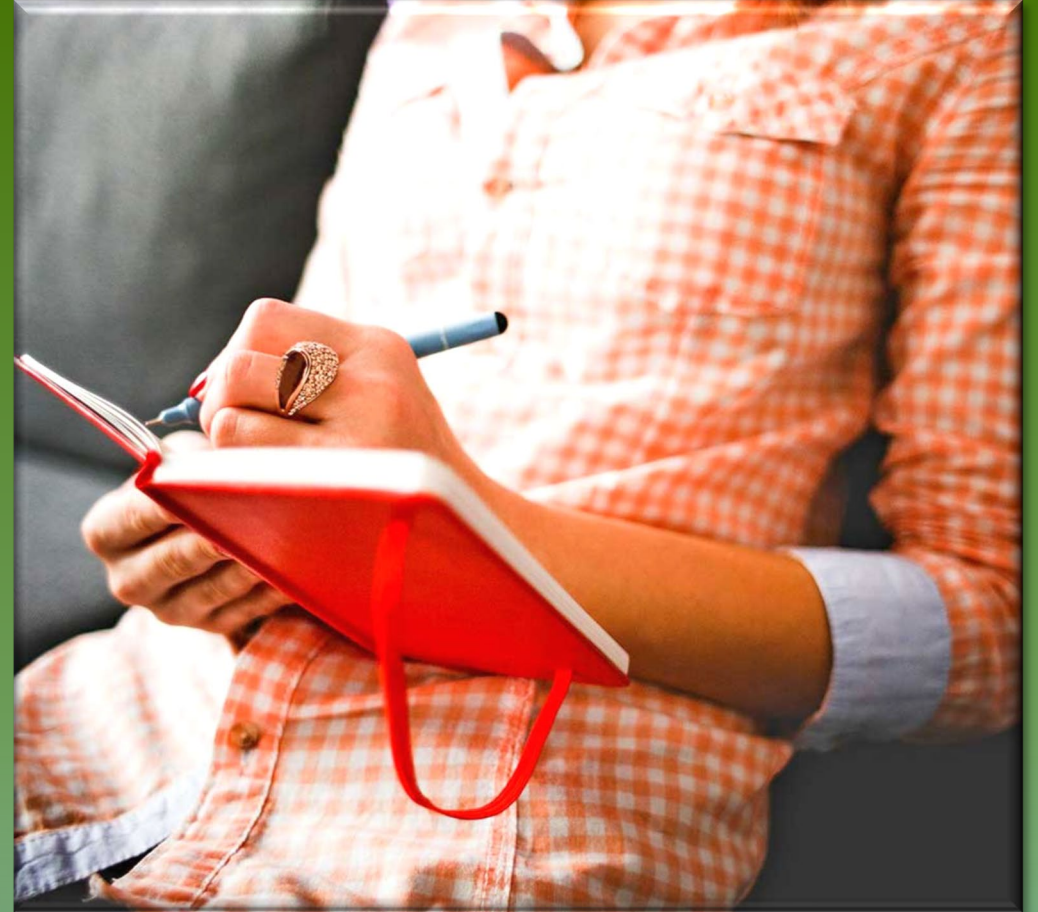
OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Envisioning the Open Adoption Relationship

Expectant parents' vision is honored:

- Desired qualities in the open adoption relationship.
- Amount of contact.
- Specific desires for hospital time and adoption planning, such as breastfeeding, who comes to pre-natal appointments, etc.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Choosing an Adoptive Family

- Ideally, expectant parents choose a family from a diverse pool of prospective adoptive parents.
- Adoptive parents must have:
 - A current, approved homestudy.
 - 10 hours of pre-adoption training.
- Adoptive parents' readiness for adoption is informed by values, approach and education provided by the agency.



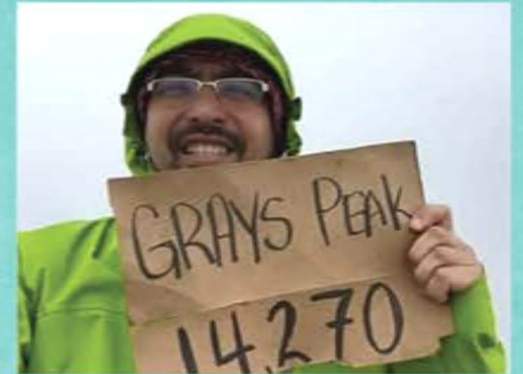
Choosing an Adoptive Family



Fun Facts

Book: The Power of Now
Movie: Lord of the Rings
Food: Cabbage rolls
Drink: Jasmine Tea
Candy: Gummy Bears

- I hiked Mt. St. Helen and five "14ers" (peaks over 14,000 ft.) in Colorado
- I biked from Seattle to Portland and to Vancouver, BC
- I enjoy reading books and playing PC games
- I love dancing and singing
- I have done drag twice in my life (and I slayed it!)



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Building an Open Adoption Relationship

- How to honor and respect each other.
- How to include each other in one another's lives and traditions.
- Involvement of extended birth family members.
- Details of what the hospital time will look like.
- Frequency of visits and communication.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Placement and Entrustment

- It's natural for birth parents to revisit their decision after the baby is born.
- Until placement occurs, birth parents can choose to stop adoption planning
Same for adoptive parents.
- Birthparents determine timing of consents.
- Placement can be accompanied by an Entrustment. A shared time symbolic of the respect, bond and commitment felt by all as they hold this child at the center.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Creating an Adoption Plan After Birth

- Trauma-informed model.
- Provide options counseling and address legal questions.
- Choosing and meeting adoptive family.
- Creating and implementing vision for adoption plan and placement.
- Ongoing counseling, relationship guidance and emotional support provided.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



When Clients Face Significant Barriers to Parenting

- Private adoption agencies are in community partnership with ODHS.
- ODHS recognizes not all parents facing state intervention choose to pursue parenthood.
- They support parents' choice to explore private agency adoption.
- The Coalition of Oregon Adoption Agencies created a handout for ODHS to share information about this process.



HOW TO MAKE A PRIVATE ADOPTION PLAN FOR YOUR CHILD IN OREGON

If the choice to parent doesn't feel right for you at this point you have another option – to plan a private agency adoption. Following is information to help you explore this path.

Reasons You May Want to Explore a Private Agency Adoption.

- You may not feel ready to parent at this time in your life.
- You may feel unable to complete the reunification requirements.
- You may already have a child who was adopted through the state and this time you want to create your own open adoption.
- You may want to choose a path for your child that avoids foster care and state involvement.

When Considering a Private Agency Adoption ...

- You can contact a licensed private agency in Oregon that specializes in infant adoptions and has a pool of prepared and approved families for you to choose from.
- Look for an agency whose approach, services and values are a good match for you.

In a Private Agency Adoption ...

- You are empowered to create an adoption plan that feels right to you.
- You select and meet the adoptive family.



Post-Adoption Services

- Access to ongoing no-cost support from a counselor that specializes in open adoption.
- Opportunity to build a community of support with other people involved in adoption constellations.
- Continued opportunities for growth and learning.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



The Future of Adoption

- Adopted people have the right to information about their adoption.
- There's support for services and programs that break down barriers to parenting.
- Advocacy for reproductive justice and access to abortion is critical.
- We must actively work to undo systems of oppression – including racism – that have played a role in the field of adoption and child welfare.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



Lived Experience in an Open Adoption



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES

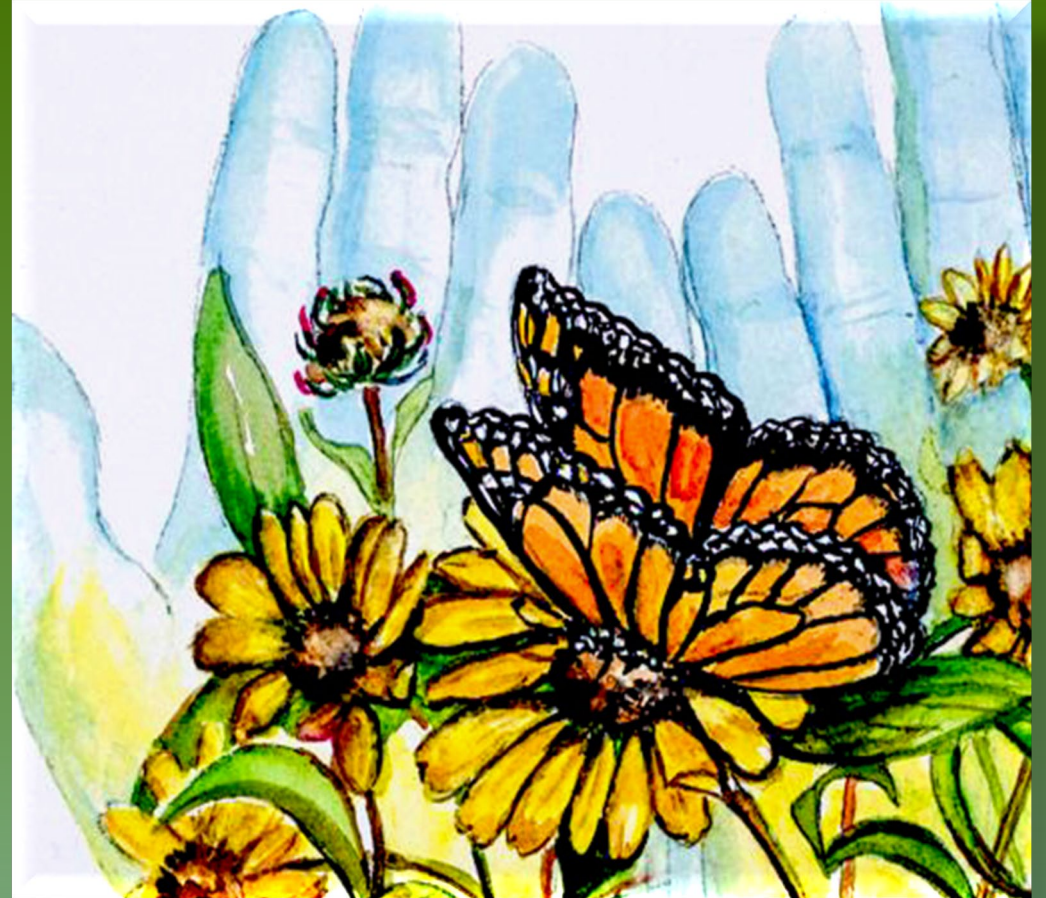


How We Can Support You

We can ...

- Be a referral source.
- Provide your client with all-options pregnancy counseling and/or open adoption services.
- Conduct free staff trainings.
- Provide OA&FS brochures and materials.

To learn more, visit our website at openadopt.org.



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES





THANK YOU!



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES



UNDERSTANDING OPEN ADOPTION



Webinar Training for Reproductive Health
Program Service Providers



OPEN ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES

