

ADOPTION OPTION

Resource Tool Kit

For Social Workers, Counselors, Educators and Providers
working with at-risk youth and pregnant women



PROVIDED BY:



**St. Elizabeth
Foundation**

Supporting Adoption in Louisiana Since 1988

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The Adoption Option Tool Kit is a booklet with up-to-date information about adoption that professionals can utilize individually and in small and large group settings. Our goal is to continue educating the public on the process and benefits of choosing the adoption option.

St. Elizabeth Foundation is a non-profit, non-sectarian adoption agency in Baton Rouge, Louisiana with over 30 years of experience supporting women in crisis or unexpected pregnancies and helping them find a loving, stable home for their children.

Visit [St. Elizabeth Foundation](#), or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Instagram](#).

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Dear Provider,

The St. Elizabeth Foundation has created this free toolkit to serve as a guide for you when helping a person facing a crisis pregnancy. (Adoption is not for everyone but is a loving option to abortion and parenting for many who want to provide a supportive home for their child.) Please take the time to look through this resource. We've provided information about what adoption looks like in 2021 as well as counseling tips and tools. In addition, this toolkit includes activities that can be used in the classroom, small group, and individual settings. Our goal is to create a culture of love and support for people in a crisis pregnancy and their babies. Our hope is that the women we serve are able to improve their futures through counseling and support. If you have any questions, concerns, or need some advice, please call St. Elizabeth Foundation at 225-769-8888 or email us at info@stelizabethfoudnation.org.

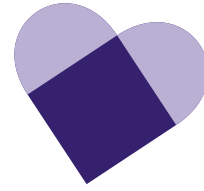
WHAT ST. ELIZABETH OFFERS:

- Free confidential counseling before birth and after placement for as long as needed
- Choice: Birth parents choose adoptive parents and type of adoption (open, semi-open, or closed)
- Experience: Established in 1988, St. Elizabeth has helped over 600 children find loving homes
- Small, supportive, family-like atmosphere
- Assistance with medical, legal, and living expenses
- Accurate information and time to make decisions
- Emotional support during a crisis or unplanned pregnancy and birth
- Loving families ready to adopt
- Placement of infants and older children

St. Elizabeth Foundation is a non-profit, non-denominational organization who desires to help families in Louisiana.



What are the main reasons someone chooses adoption for their child?



Women who experience unplanned pregnancies come from all walks of life. There is no right or wrong reason for choosing adoption. Here are some common reasons women have chosen adoption in the past.

- 1 NOT READY TO BE A MOTHER**
Some women feel they are not ready or may be too young to be a mother at the point they experience an unplanned pregnancy.
- 2 CAN'T AFFORD TO RAISE A CHILD**
Children are expensive. Some women may look at their financial situation and choose adoption in order to give their child a life they could not provide.
- 3 CAN'T RAISE ANOTHER CHILD**
It is common that a woman who chooses adoption for her baby has other children. She may not have the time or resources to take care of a baby while continuing to do what is best for her other children.
- 4 AFRAID OF FOSTER CARE**
Some women know that their current home or life situation is not suitable for children. Creating an open adoption plan gives her more control and contact with her child. Adoption offers safety and stability for her child.
- 5 WANT CHILD TO HAVE A BETTER LIFE**
There are many reasons, such as finances, poor health, addiction, or incarceration that can prevent a woman from providing the best life possible for her child. Creating an adoption plan may be a way for a more hopeful future.
- 6 WANT CHILD TO HAVE TWO PARENTS**
It is not easy being a single parent. Some women choose adoption to offer their child the stability and support of a two-parent home.
- 7 DON'T HAVE SUPPORT TO PARENT**
If a woman does not have support from friends and family to raise a child, parenting is going to be difficult. She may choose adoption to give her child the supportive community she wants.

ADOPTION OPTION: OPENERS

When you encounter a person in a crisis pregnancy, it's important to discuss all the options, including adoption, so they can make the best decision for them and their child. Many people don't know about adoption and there are many myths and misconceptions, so it can be hard to start the conversation. Here are some "openers" that the social workers at St. Elizabeth Foundation have found helpful. Choose the one that fits your situation.

"I see you are having trouble making a decision about your pregnancy, let's call a St. Elizabeth counselor right now to discuss your options."

"Do you feel ready to parent?"

"There are options besides abortion and parenting. Would you like to hear about them?"

"What do you know about adoption? It is very different than you think it is."

"Is your home a good place to raise a child?"

"Ethically, I have to make sure you are aware of all your options. Let me tell you about adoption."

"You might be surprised to know about how open adoptions work."

"Are you aware of the health risks associated with abortion?"

Watch a Movie

Movies are great vehicles to start a conversation about important topics. These movies depict an adoption story and can serve to create a safe place to discuss the adoption option.

Annie

Despicable Me

Angels in the Outfield

Kung Fu Panda

October Baby

Stuart Little

Candleshoe

Anne of Green Gables

Blind Side

Meet the Robinsons

Tarzan (Disney)

Odd Life of Timothy Green

Juno (adult theme)

This list was compiled by the National Council for Adoption

Support Interview: Interview your family members. Ask them how much time they are willing to commit out of their day to childcare if you were pregnant and wanted to raise your baby.

Collage: Make a collage of all the things you like to do and things you want to accomplish. Talk about where a baby would fit into the picture.

Talk: Talk to someone who is adopted. Find out how they feel about their birth parents, adoptive parents, and adoption.

Imagine: Imagine that your pregnant friend has chosen the adoption option and other friends are giving her a hard time and bullying her. Get into groups and brainstorm ways you can be supportive of her and her decision.

Research: Visit the following websites to research adoption. Find 5 facts about adoption that surprised you. www.stelizabethfoundation.org, www.adoptioncouncil.org.

Journal: Choose one of the following topics and write about it. "Pregnant women who choose adoption make a loving sacrifice" or "Single moms need a lot of family support to take care of their babies."

Listen: Set a timer for 10 minutes. Try to study while you listen to a "crying baby" video on YouTube.

Watch: Watch the videos on the St. Elizabeth Foundation website. Make a list of pros and cons of adoption. stelizabethfoundation.org/our-stories

Budget: Make a list of all the supplies that a baby/child needs including daycare, transportation and housing, research the cost of each and add them together. Also, research assistance programs to determine funding available. Compare the two amounts.

Read: Read "stories" on the following pages of the toolkit and write a paragraph about the choices these women made.

Act: Get with a group and create a skit where you tell your pregnant friend about the Adoption Option.

Program: Program the St. Elizabeth Foundation phone number into your phone so you can pass on information to friends, 225-769-8888.

Statistics: Create a survey to look at how people look at adoption (www.surveymonkey.com). Use results to generate charts and math problems.

We know that words matter. The topic of adoption can be very emotional and we aren't always aware that the language we are using can have negative impacts on others. Using positive language will help to correct the old stigmas that adoption used to carry and portray it as the positive, loving option for those who can't or aren't ready to parent. Positive adoption language also honors and respects every participant of an adoption.

Positive vs. Negative

Birth parent

Real parent, natural parent

Birth child

Own child, real child, natural child

Choosing an adoption plan

Giving away, giving up your child

Finding a family to parent your child

Putting your child up for adoption

Deciding to parent your child

Keeping your baby

Person/individual who was adopted

Adoptee

To parent

Keep

Child in need of a family

Adoptable child, available child

Parent

Adoptive parent

Was adopted

Is adopted

Birth relative

Blood relative

WHY CHOOSE ADOPTION?

Benefits of Adoption for Birth Mothers:

- Birth mothers choose the adoptive parents/family for their child.
- Birth mothers decide if they want a closed, semi-open, or open adoption plan.
- Birth mothers have access to free, lifetime counseling services.
- After making an adoption plan, most women feel stronger and more confident.
- Women who place a baby for adoption in Louisiana have better-paying jobs, finish high school more often, and get more job training and education.



Benefits of Adoption for the Individual who was Adopted:

- The baby is given a great start in life with the love and security of a supportive family.
- Children who are adopted often have more opportunities, resources, education, and stable home environments in which they are able to develop meaningful relationships.
- Open adoptions provide an opportunity for adopted children to relate to their birth parents/identity while also giving birth parents the opportunity to watch their child grow and know firsthand about their well-being.

5 MYTHS ABOUT ADOPTION

1 THERE ARE NO BABIES.

Around 70,000 adoptions take place each year in the U.S. About 18,000 of those adoptions are of American newborns.

2 ADOPTION TAKES YEARS.

While the adoption process is unique to each family, most families bring their children home within two years of submitting the proper paperwork.

3 ALL BIRTH MOTHERS ARE UNSTABLE TEENAGERS.

While some birth mothers are teens, the average birth mom in 2021 is in her twenties and has made the choice to give her child a life that she herself is not able to provide.

4 ADOPTED CHILDREN ARE "STOLEN".

Laws in America ensure the safety of birth families and do not allow for coercion or bribery of a birth mother. Adoption agencies can guide families in the most ethical and legal way to adopt.

5 BIRTH PARENTS CAN TAKE THEIR CHILD BACK.

Once an adoption has been finalized in court, the child is as much yours as if you had given birth.

PUBLIC OR FOSTER CARE ADOPTION: There are some children who are in the custody of the state. They are cared for in the public Foster Care System. When the rights of their biological parents have been terminated, permanent, loving homes are found for them with adoptive couples.

INTRA-FAMILY ADOPTIONS: Intra-family adoptions allow a child to be adopted by a legal relative. Very commonly, a stepparent will adopt the biological children of his/her spouse or a grandparent will adopt his/her grandchild if the child has been living in the home for at least six months. Other legal relatives may also be eligible to adopt a child as well. This type of adoption dispenses of strict requirements imposed on other adoptions.

AGENCY ADOPTIONS (public-state adoption units and private-nonprofit adoption agencies): Adoption agencies work with adoptive parents and birth parents through all aspects of adoption providing legal, medical, counseling and follow up support. A reputable agency will be licensed and must meet the licensing standards maintained by the state licensing agency. Louisiana law requires agencies to obtain formal consent from both birth parents (mother/father) as well as the statement of medical history. In an agency adoption, an attorney is not required to represent either the birth mother or father nor is parental consent required for underage birth parents. (St. Elizabeth Foundation, as a matter of policy, provides private legal representation for all birth parents regardless of the fact that the law does not require such representation.) Once consent is given, parental rights are terminated and if absent of fraud or duress, the consent and terminated rights are irrevocable. The adoptive parents become the "parents" of the child.

- o **St. Elizabeth Foundation Adoption Agency**
 - State Licensed, Private Non-Profit
 - Licensing body regulates both professional and ethical standards
 - Reviewed annually by licensing agency
 - Professionally trained staff with expertise in child and family dynamics including social workers and attorneys
 - Extensive education, counseling and follow-up support services for the birth parents and the adoptive family
 - Legal representation is provided to birth parents
 - Parental consent not required for underage birth parent
 - Final decree of adoption filed six months after child's placement in adoptive home

PRIVATE OR INDEPENDENT ADOPTIONS: Private or independent adoptions occur without an agency, usually through an attorney. Private adoptions begin at different stages depending on the circumstances of each case. An adoptive couple and birth mother, having previously agreed to adoption, may ask an attorney to simply formalize the adoption. Another couple may contact an attorney for assistance with the entire process of finding and adopting a child.

- o **Private**
 - No licensing requirements other than attorney's license to practice
 - No licensing body other than state regulation for attorneys
 - No annual review
 - Arranged by an attorney or physician
 - Law requires only two counseling sessions for a birth mother; adoptive family receives only legal advice
 - Attorney required to represent both parents when they sign consent forms
 - Parental consent required for underage birth parents
 - Final decree filed one year after placement in adoptive home

Who can be adopted?

- Every state in the United States allows for the adoption of a child who is eligible to be adopted. Some states specifically require the child must be under the age of 18, a few other states allow parties to petition the court for the adoption of persons over the age of 18 but under age 21, and the majority of states allow the adoption of any person, regardless of age. Children of every race and ethnicity, from every background, and in every shape and size are eligible for adoption.
- Children with special needs are also available for adoption. Special needs children are those children who are harder to place for adoption due to factors such as their age, race, ethnicity, physical or emotional problems.

Who can adopt a child?

- Under Louisiana law, a single person over the age of 18 or a couple married and living together may adopt a child. Prospective applicants must submit to a home investigation (Home Study) to determine whether they are suitable to adopt a child.
- Adoptions often occur within the family. A stepparent, grandparent, or other relative may adopt the child of family member to ensure that the child has the same name and legal rights as other members of the immediate family.

Noteworthy Terms:

- **FOSTER CARE:** There are some children who are in the custody of the state. They are cared for in the public Foster Care System. When the rights of their biological parents have been terminated, permanent, loving homes are found for them with adoptive couples.
- **HOME STUDY:** Louisiana law requires a "Home Study" or home investigation of prospective adoptive parents in both agency and private adoptions. Although the home study may seem intimidating, it is not an attempt to find perfect parents. Rather, the home study is designed to find parents that are caring and committed to the best interest of the child.
- **CONSENT:** Louisiana law provides that a child's biological parents may voluntarily surrender the child for adoption, but consent is required. Consent for adoption of the child must be obtained from the biological mother, legal fathers, putative father who have established parental rights and the agency itself in agency adoptions. Once the consent is given, the act of surrender is irrevocable absent fraud or duress. Consent must be obtained from legal/putative fathers, because the putative fathers may block an adoption if they have established parental rights. A putative father is an alleged father of a child born out of wedlock.
- **PUTATIVE FATHER REGISTRY:** If the birth father opposes the adoption, his right to oppose the adoption depends on whether he supported the birth mother and/or child upon notice of his paternity. Evidence of support includes registering with the "Putative Father Registry" that establishes that he is the father of the baby.
- **ADOPTION SUBSIDIES:** Adoption can be quite expensive due to adoption fees, legal fees, housing, counseling, and medical costs. Tax benefits, federal and state subsidies, employer-provided assistance and loans are among the types of assistance available to adoptive families.

WHAT DOES THE PROCESS LOOK LIKE FOR A BIRTH PARENT?

Adoption is an amazing act of love. But it's still normal to have doubts or a fear of the unknown. Knowing all the facts can help you feel better. Overall, we put you in control while holding your hand through every emotional, financial, and medical step. While every birth mother's experience is unique, here's what you can expect when you contact St. Elizabeth.

Step 1: Reaching Out

You can call, email, text, or chat with us. Even if you're not sure what you want to do, you can still contact us. We're here to help you make the best decision for you and your baby.

Step 2: Start with Counseling

You'll meet with one of the caring and experienced St. Elizabeth counselors. With them, you'll talk through all your options and learn more about making an adoption plan.

Step 3: Choose a Family

If you choose an adoption plan, you also get to choose your baby's family. We're confident each one of these families can give your baby a loving home and a bright future.

Step 4: Pregnancy Assistance

You're in control every step of the way. And we'll be there to support you every step of the way, too. We can provide pregnancy assistance to help with your living, medical, legal, and counseling costs.

Step 5: Delivery

When it comes to planning for the birth of your baby, you can make the decisions you feel comfortable with. After your baby is born, St. Elizabeth can help you and your chosen family finalize your adoption plan.

Step 6: The Adoption

An open adoption means you can stay in touch after the birth. It's your choice if you want an open or closed adoption. We're here to help you decide what works best for you.

Step 7: Post-Placement Counseling

Even when you know you've made the right choice, we understand how emotional it can be. That's why we're still here for you after the birth, no matter which adoption plan you choose.

WHAT DOES THE PROCESS LOOK LIKE FOR ADOPTIVE PARENTS?

Giving a baby a loving home can complete your family and provide the child with the best opportunities. We've helped more than 600 babies find loving homes, and your family could be one of them. We're here to support the birth mothers through their process and decisions, and we're here for the adopting families as well.

Step 1: Qualify

St. Elizabeth Foundation requires prospective adoptive parents to be a married couple who have been married for at least five years.

Step 2: Apply

Through St. Elizabeth, prospective adopting parents fill out a formal application to officially begin. After we review your application, you'll start the home study process. Be prepared for this to take some time.

Step 3: Home Study Process

The home study includes background checks, a home visit to see the physical environment, an assessment of emotional and relationship stability, and a parenting philosophy discussion.

Step 4: Education Program

This program educates prospective adopting families. You'll learn about unique attributes of adoptive families and how to help your adopted child understand adoption. It also covers much of the public misconceptions about adoption.

Step 5: Chosen

The prospective adopting parents will create a family profile book to describe their lives, families, hobbies, etc. These profiles will be shown to birth parents when they are ready to choose a family for their child.

Step 6: Legal Rights and Responsibilities

What kind of adoption will you have? What are your rights? What are the birth parents' rights? St. Elizabeth specializes in semi-open adoption, but whether yours is open or confidential, we help navigate your legal responsibilities.

Step 7: Adoption Finalization

Once a birth mother chooses you to parent her child, St. Elizabeth will help your family process and finalize your adoption by the court.

Kim was a birth mother living in Gonzales, Louisiana. She had no means of transportation, was 20 years old, had 3 children, and was pregnant with a 4th child. Her oldest child was being raised by his father. The other children were an 18-month old girl and a 10-month old boy. The father of the two children she was parenting and the one she was pregnant with was in jail for abusing her. The last grade she completed was 8th. Her mother died from a drug overdose in 2008 and she did not have contact with her father. The only family contact Kim had was with her brother, sister, and grandmother but none were able to help her financially. We were able to help Kim create an adoption plan for her baby and helped her improve her life to enable her to continue caring for her other children.

Monica was an 18-year-old woman attending college out-of-state who contacted us because she was pregnant. She decided she was not ready to parent, because she was too young and wanted to finish her college degree. She and her boyfriend came in for counseling and decided adoption was right for them. She moved home and hid her pregnancy from friends. She delivered her baby and placed her with a family she chose from out-of-state. Monica has a semi-open adoption and has now graduated from college. Monica is happy with her placement.

Dominique was living in Texas and became pregnant through an encounter with a homeless man. She did not have the resources or emotional support to raise a child alone. She had already chosen adoption for her other child and came to SEF for help. She moved into a maternity home and placed her son with a family who had been awaiting a child for many years.

Amanda was in a relationship with her long time boyfriend with whom she had a 3-year-old son when she came to SEF. She was in school pursuing a degree in nursing. She was at a party one night where she was raped and became pregnant. Amanda's boyfriend resented Amanda for the rape and did not believe he could raise this child. Amanda had her hands full with her 3-year-old, her dream of finishing school and considered abortion. She came to SEF and decided to place the baby after learning more about the option of adoption. She has an open adoption and has visited him several times.

Lashicka was living in Shreveport and became pregnant. She had two other children with a man from New Orleans. She was living in her mother's two bedroom house with her mother, mother's boyfriend, brother and brother's children. She contacted SEF because she knew she could not take care of 3 children on her own. SEF helped get her into her own home, and she placed her baby with a blessed family of her choosing.

Tami was a 40-year-old woman who became pregnant. She already had 2 children and was already struggling financially and emotionally under the strain of parenthood. She and her boyfriend decided to choose adoption for the good of all their children.

Cami was a young married woman with 3 children. She contacted SEF while receiving help at a drug rehab facility because she became pregnant while using drugs. The father was not her husband. After Cami finished her treatment, she started the adoption process because her husband resented the baby. She placed her baby, receives pictures and letters often and has her life on track with a job and she no longer uses drugs.



Nala was pregnant and engaged with plans to purchase a house, get married and start a family. Right before she delivered the baby, her fiancé left her for another woman. He took everything and Nala and her 12-year-old daughter were left with nothing. She did not have the resources to care for this child and wanted her child to have a 2-parent home. She placed her son into a loving home. She has gone back to school and is thriving.

Bridget was an exotic dancer who never planned to have children. She was saving her money and planned to move out-of-state to go to college in the fall. She became pregnant and wanted her baby to grow up in a two parent home so she contacted SEF. she is currently working on her dream to graduate from college.

How does the individual who was adopted feel about their adoption?

The chief concern of birth parents considering adoption is that they worry that their child will feel abandoned by them. They love their baby, and they are afraid that their child will not understand their loving sacrifice. All children adopted through St. Elizabeth know that they were adopted, and their parents work to ensure that they feel loved and cherished by their parents and their birth parents. This letter written by a young mother who was adopted expresses the feelings of most adults who were adopted. Sharing this letter can help make birth parents more comfortable with the adoption option.



"I have to say that now that I am a mother I cannot even begin to imagine the courage it would take to make the decision to give up a child. I think that it takes ultimate self-sacrifice, love and a little faith to place your child's best interest above your own. I have been so blessed to have been raised by two adoring and selfless parents. Not a day goes by that I do not wish that I could reassure my birth mother that she made the right decision. She gave me the opportunity to live a life that she could not provide for me at that time. She entrusted my care to two amazing people, who wanted nothing more in this world than a child to love. There has never been a moment that I have felt abandoned or unloved. On the contrary, she could have chosen to end her pregnancy. Instead she chose life, MY LIFE!!! and I am eternally grateful!!!"

Transracial adoption is very common in the United States. It is important for adopting couples to recognize that there are cultural differences among different races and that they can help their children by educating themselves about their children's racial and cultural heritage.

Key factors to consider and discuss if you are considering a transracial adoption:

- Parents will need to go an extra step to gain the skills, knowledge and attitude necessary to help their child develop positive identities.
- Self Awareness – explore your own race and culture. How has this impacted your life experiences?
- Multi-cultural planning – make intentional avenues for your child to learn about and participate in his or her own birth culture.
- Survival skills – be prepared to talk about race (and adoption!) A LOT! You will have to teach your child the skills to talk about these things themselves, and how to live in a society that can make judgements based on first appearances.

Resources for Transracial Adoptive Families:

- Read a book. There are several books out there for parents to help prepare them for a transracial adoption. A couple of suggestions include [Chocolate Hair Vanilla Care](#) and [In Their Own Voices: Transracial Adoptees Tell Their Stories](#).
- Read books with your children about adoption and transracial adoption. A few suggestions include "I Don't Have Your Eyes" by Carrie Kitz, "My Family is Forever" by Nancy Carlson, "Pablo's Tree" by Pat Mora, and "The Mulberry Bird: An Adoption Story" by Anne Braff Brodzinsky.
- Subscribe to a blog or website dedicated to transracial adoption. Many families will document their personal journeys, struggles, and success with adoption through these avenues.
- Join a Facebook group. These groups can act as online forums or support groups where you can talk to other people who are going through or have already gone through a similar experience.
- Watch a video or listen to a podcast. Red Table Talk, a video and podcast series, tackles current issues including transracial adoption. Visit their website, redtabletalk.com or watch their adoption videos, "[Raised by White Parents: A Black Adoptee Speaks](#)" and "[Should White People Adopt Black Kids?](#)"

*The following information pertains to the state of Louisiana.

ADOPTION LAW:

Birth Mothers: The birth mother may sign her voluntary surrender of parental rights on the 3rd day following the birth not including the day of the birth. This is a permanent decision. The birth mother must have at least two hours of counseling by a licensed clinical social worker in Louisiana. St. Elizabeth Foundation provides unlimited counseling services to their birth parents before and after placement.

Known birth fathers: The birth father (if they are not married to the birth mother) can sign the official surrender documents at any point before delivery. This decision is irrevocable. The birth father (if married to the birth mother) may sign his surrender on the 3rd day following the birth, not including the day of the birth. If a birth parent surrenders their parental rights through adoption, their financial responsibility for the child is terminated. The adoptive parents will be in every way responsible for the child.

Unknown birth fathers: If the birth father is unknown and a birth mother chooses adoption, an agency professional can assist in the process.

Support: If birth mothers need financial assistance during their pregnancy, St. Elizabeth Foundation is allowed by law to help with medical care, living expenses, or other costs related to the pregnancy and adoption. St. Elizabeth Foundation will help birth parents apply for any public assistance or insurance benefits to which birth mothers are entitled.

Prospective Families: Prospective adopting families are chosen by the birth parents (unless they prefer not to) and undergo background checks (including criminal background check), home visits and counseling to create the best placement.

ADOPTION RELATED STATISTICS:

Abortions (2017): 8,144 abortions were provided in Louisiana. (According to preliminary figures provided by the Louisiana Department of Health)

Live Births (2018): Louisiana reported 59,615 live births. (Provided by 2019 National Vital Statistics Report)

Non-marital live births (2018): 53.3% or 31,775 of live births were to unmarried women, second in the nation. (Provided by 2019 National Vital Statistics Report)

Teen Pregnancy (2018): Louisiana ranked 47th in births to females between 15-19 years old. (Provided by 2019 Louisiana Health Report Card)

Low Birthweight (2018): Louisiana ranked 49th in low birthweight babies. (Provided by 2019 Louisiana Health Report Card)

Foster Care (2019): 7,016 children were served in foster care; 2,187 children were reunified with families; 893 children were adopted (Provided by Department of Children and Family Services 2019 Fact Sheet)

Many pregnant women will ask questions such as "If I make an adoption placement, will my baby end up in foster care?"

The answer to this question is NO. By making an adoption plan with an agency, a woman is taking control of the situation and guaranteeing that their child will avoid foster care. With an agency like St. Elizabeth Foundation, pregnant women have the ability to choose the family that will be parent their child, knowing that this family has been well screened by the agency. The families that work with St. Elizabeth Foundation are safe, loving, and ready to take on the responsibility of parenting.

Often times, foster care is not a voluntary decision by a parent/guardian whereas adoption is a 100% voluntary choice. One major difference between foster care and private adoption is that the pregnant woman has control and choice in an adoption- choice to make the placement, choice to choose a family, and with St. Elizabeth Foundation, choice to receive updates or continue communication with the child and adoptive family after placement.

Licensed Clinical Social Workers provide counseling to:

- Ensure that birth parents are making the best decision for them and their baby
- Provide unlimited counseling before and after birth, as needed
- Discuss what adoption means and how it works
- Emphasize feelings about adoption and how to handle them
- Provide grief counseling associated with adoption plan
- Set up reunions, share pictures and information in open adoptions



Counseling helps with stresses that impact birth parents' feelings such as:

- Feelings about adoption
- Support or lack thereof from family members and the other birth parent
- Adoption decisions: open, semi-open, or closed
- Feelings generated by negative treatment by friends, family, hospital staff and their doctors
- Anticipating painful feelings and seeing adoption as a painful, loving sacrifice
- Understanding that feelings of loss don't signal a wrong decision



Birth Father Counseling:

- Birth fathers receive pre-placement counseling similar to mothers
- Provided with adoption process education
- Grief counseling is available with an emphasis on ways to handle the sense of loss associated with the loving sacrifice of adoption
- Can receive updates about the child in open adoptions



ADOPTION IS A TRULY HEROIC ACT- AN ACT OF AMAZING LOVE!

Knowledge is power.

Don't make a decision without exploring all options. Calling St. Elizabeth to talk about adoption doesn't take much time and can really help make an informed decision about the best way to parent.

How do women feel after they place their baby?

Talking about adoption can be difficult. Every woman's story is unique to her. However, watching a video about adoption can help start the conversation and answer some tough questions. Visit <https://stelizabethfoundation.org/our-stories/> or St. Elizabeth's [Youtube](#) channel to find several videos on adoption.

What will people think if you choose adoption?

People gossip no matter what you choose to do. If you choose adoption, counselors at St. Elizabeth will help you learn what to say to people who don't understand your loving sacrifice.

How are adoptive parents chosen?

There are high standards for choosing adoptive parents at St. Elizabeth Foundation. They have extensive interviews, criminal background checks and psychological screening. If you want to, you can pick the couple who will adopt your baby and get to know them. If you choose an open adoption, you can stay in contact with the couple who adopts your baby.

What if my parents disapprove?

Certainly you should talk this over with your parents. However, the final decision about what is the best choice for your baby is yours. The counselors at St. Elizabeth can help you talk to your parents about the option of adoption.

Maybe my boyfriend will support my baby and me after the baby is born?

Babies don't usually change a guy- if he isn't helping now he probably won't change after the baby is born.

It is too hard to choose adoption.

It will be very hard, and St. Elizabeth counselors are trained to help you handle your feelings. Making an adoption plan is not the abandonment of your baby but a responsible, unselfish sacrifice.

Abortion would be easier.

If choosing adoption sounds hard to you, aborting your baby will be even harder. There is no easy solution. Women who choose abortion are more likely to experience infertility, future pregnancy complications and various kinds of cancer later in life according to the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals.

Questions to Ask Yourself if You are Pregnant:

1. What do I want out of life for myself?
2. Could I handle a child and a job and/or school at the same time?
3. Have I managed school and/or job and other activities well in the past?
4. Am I ready to give up the freedom to do what I want to do when I want to do it?
5. An example of something I would have to give up by having a child with me is...
6. Am I willing to cut back on my social life and stay home while my friends go out?
7. Would I miss my free time and privacy?
8. Can I afford to support a child?
9. Do I want to raise my child in the neighborhood I am living in now?
10. How might a child interfere with my growth and personal development?
11. How would parenting a child change my educational plans?
12. Am I willing to give a great part of my life- at least 18 years- to being a responsible parent?
13. Do I like doing things with children?
14. Do I want my child to be like me?
15. Do I expect a child to make my life happy?
16. When I am around small children for a while, how do I feel after being around them?
17. Am I able to give the child the love he/she needs and deserves?
18. Am I patient enough to deal with the noise, confusion, and the 24-hour-a-day responsibility of having a child?
19. What kind of time and space do I need for myself?
20. What do I do now when I am angry or upset?
21. What would I do to a child if I lost my temper or became angry?
22. What does good discipline mean to me?
23. How would I discipline a toddler?
24. Do I get along with my family?
25. How would I take care of my child's health and safety?

Mech Adoption Interest Inventory

Please answer "Agree" or "Disagree" to the following questions:

1. I would be interested in meeting with other girls who are pregnant to discuss how to make decisions about resolving a pregnancy.
2. I would be interested in talking with other girls who have chosen adoption for their child.
3. I might consider adoption if I thought it would help me finish school and get a job that I wanted.
4. I might consider adoption if I thought my child would have a better chance in life with another family.
5. I would be interested in talking to a family who had adopted a child.
6. I would be interested in talking to someone who was adopted.
7. If I could meet the prospective adoptive parents, I might consider adoption for my child.
8. I might consider adoption only if I could have a part in choosing the adoptive family.
9. I might consider adoption only if I could see my child once in a while.
10. I might consider an adoption plan only if I could have information (pictures, progress reports) of my child growing up and knew everything was all right.
11. I might consider adoption if I thought that in the long run it would help me reach my own vocational and career goals.
12. I might consider adoption if I was sure that the adoptive family would give my child love, security, and a good home.
13. I might consider adoption if I knew it fulfilled my responsibility to the child and I could move on with my life.
14. I am considering adoption.

What do I say to a client who says...?

I could never give my baby away.

- Giving away a child would be very difficult. Why do you feel like adoption means you are giving your child away?
- Adoption can be a courageous and unselfish decision because you are putting the child above yourself.
- With adoption, you are making a plan for the child's future, not abandoning or giving away the child.

I can be a single parent.

- Were you raised by a single parent household? What are the pros and cons?
- How would single parenting affect your future goals?
- How can single parenting affect the child?

What if my baby ends up in a bad home, like the ones I see on TV?

- Did you know that many famous and successful people are adopted, such as Faith Hill, Reese Witherspoon, and former President Gerald Ford?
- Adoptive parents are closely evaluated and educated during the home study process.
- Did you know that you can help choose the family who will parent your child? This will allow you to see what the child's home will be like...

My family and friends don't want me to make an adoption plan.

- What are the concerns of your family and friends?
- Do you agree with their concerns?
- I could give you information that may help them understand why you are considering this option. Would you like to review it?
- Will your family and friends help you care for the child for the next 18 years? Why or why not?

I am hoping to have a relationship with the father of the baby.

- What is the status of the relationship?
- Do you have plans to get married?
- Has he been helpful to you during your pregnancy?
- Does he have other children? Does he have a relationship with those children?

What do I say to a client who says...?

I want someone to love me, and I want someone to love.

- Love is important. However, what else do you need to be a single parent?
- Can you share with me how you plan to meet the emotional and social needs of this child?
- Let's start with your need for love. What can you do to meet that need?
- Can a child satisfy that need?

My child will hate me.

- Why do you think your child will hate you?
- What can you do to make sure your child knows how much you care about and love them?
- What would be your reasons for choosing adoption? Do you feel these things show that you hate your child? What if your child could know the reasons you chose adoption?

If I give my baby away, it would hurt too much, and I would always regret it.

- Would you like to talk to someone who made an adoption plan for their child?
- Do you feel like you would have to turn off your love and caring for your child?
- Do you think that adoption is the only option that is difficult? Do you think there may be consequences and difficult emotions to all of your options?
- Just because something hurts does not actually mean it is not the right thing to do. Can you think of an experience in your life when this was true?

I have a child that I am struggling to parent.

- Have you thought about making an adoption plan?
- Are you getting the kind of support from the birth father and your family members that you need?
- Would you describe your home as chaotic? Is it a good place for a child?

MISSION STATEMENT

Founded in 1988, St. Elizabeth Foundation is a non-profit, non-sectarian, licensed maternity and adoption agency whose mission is to offer options counseling to birth mothers experiencing a crisis pregnancy and placement services for adopting couples. The agency provides an alternative to abortion and single parenting. Through advocacy, counseling, medical, and housing services it supports a pregnant woman in her decision to make an adoption plan.

ALSO AVAILABLE: FREE TOOLKIT TRAINING AND FREE CEU OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAFF MEETINGS, IN-SERVICE, WORKSHOPS, CLASSES AND CONFERENCES.



**St. Elizabeth
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Supporting Adoption in Louisiana Since 1988

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