



ADOPTION STANDARDS FOR PREGNANCY HELP ORGANIZATIONS

*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.
There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.*

*Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many
parts form one body, so it is with Christ.*

1 Corinthians 12: 4-6, 12

1 Corinthians 12 speaks of how the Body of Christ has many parts, but it is all of the parts together that form one body. Christ-centered pregnancy centers gifted in equipping men and women to choose life and parent and Christ-centered adoption professionals gifted in supporting those choosing life and adoption need each other.

We know how effective pregnancy help centers are at reaching women who are considering abortion. When pregnancy help center advocates can form a trusting relationship with a client, this opportunity cannot be taken lightly. The vulnerable men and women they are working with are relying on them to help them make an informed decision and then to make connections to the resources that best support them long term.

Empowering our clients to make an informed decision requires us to be informed and equipped to present all alternatives to abortion without bias and requires us to make timely relational connections to those who can support our clients with the alternatives they are considering.

STANDARDS FOR PREGNANCY CENTERS REGARDING ADOPTION REFERRALS

Affirmed in 2023 by the Leadership Alliance of Pregnancy Care Organizations* (LAPCO)

- 1 Center assures all pregnancy decision coaching personnel, whether licensed professionals, para-professionals, or peer counselors, are trained to present the adoption option as a realistic alternative without bias.
- 2 Center identifies adoption referrals that align with the center's mission, values, and ethical priorities** Ideally, the center will offer more than one referral option, but less is appropriate to ensure referral aligns with values.
- 3 Center assures that each adoption referral is made to a licensed, reputable, and adequately insured entity.
- 4 Center does not accept financial remuneration from any outside adoption agencies or enter into partnership agreements or other special contracts with such agencies.
- 5 Center does not act as an adoption broker, connecting expecting moms to prospective adoptive parents, unless the center is licensed as an adoption agency.
- 6 A client expressing interest in learning more about adoption is provided referrals and a permission based and relational connection is made to an adoption professional.***
- 7 Pregnancy center personnel are not permitted to adopt the child of a client or recommend other persons as adoptive parents for the client's child.
- 8 In ongoing support for the client considering adoption, pregnancy center personnel remain an advocate for the interest of the client, but do not act as a mediator in any manner between the client and adoption professional.

**** LAPCO Members: American Pregnancy Association, CareNet, Christian Adoption Alliance, Embrace Grace, Focus on the Family, Heartbeat International, Life International, Life Matters, ICU Mobile, Lifeline Children's Services, NIFLA***

******[See the 5 elements of making a connection](#)***

SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING A LIFE AFFIRMING CULTURE THAT AFFIRMS ALL LIFE OPTIONS

- 1 During the interview process, assess prospective staff and volunteers biases on each option.
- 2 Review internal and external forms, materials, etc. to assess for bias towards one life option.
- 3 Highlight all life option stories in external communications.
- 4 Consider counting a connection/meeting with an adoption entity or other outside resource as a successful follow up meeting.
- 5 Include outcomes on adoption connections in your reports to the board and external communication.
- 6 Follow standards for Pregnancy Help Organizations regarding adoption referrals.*



5 ELEMENTS OF MAKING AN ADOPTION CONNECTION

Adapted with permission from CareNet, Making Life Disciple's "5 Elements for Making a Church Connection"

An effective referral to an outside adoption professional does five things well: it's relational, permission-based, respects confidentiality, minimizes risk, and works with a trusted partner. Let's look at each of those elements individually.

1. RELATIONAL

Centers have often provided a client with a list of potential adoption professionals in an effort to provide the information, but not show any bias towards a certain provider. This can be helpful; however, handing someone in crisis a list is rarely effective in connecting them to needed resources. Our goal here is to facilitate a genuine relational connection with an adoption professional who is equipped to provide additional information to our client on adoption and help her navigate the difficult decision of placing or parenting. For this reason, we like to talk about quality referrals as "care connections." These "care connections" are best when they connect both ways. Care connections include open communication between the center and adoption professional following the initial connection.



2. PERMISSION-BASED

The client should always be in the driver's seat and should choose the adoption connection they feel is best for them. This process builds trust and allows the client to be empowered to make a good choice and one they feel in control over. This necessitates two corollaries: first, that the client have a choice on whether or not to accept a connection with an adoption professional and second, that the client be able to choose the adoption professional. Again, our goal is not simply to send the client home with a list of professionals to contact on their own. It's to facilitate a genuine relational connection with someone who is equipped to meet the client's ongoing needs and will help them continue to embrace and explore all life options.

To start making that connection, the client advocate should develop a sense of the client's receptivity by providing relevant information about each life option and asking good questions. The client advocate can easily introduce the care connection option when making a care or follow-

up plan with the client. She might say: “As we’ve gone over the things that you’ve said you need, you expressed a desire to potentially learn more about the adoption option in order to help you make a decision. Talking with an adoption professional does not obligate you to this decision. It simply provides you with more information to make an informed decision. There are several options for adoption professionals. Would you like to be introduced to one of these professionals?” If the client agrees, the advocate can tell her more about the adoption professionals, the types of adoption, care, and support they each provide, and the fact that, if she is interested, a center representative can call or text the adoption professional to set up a meeting. The advocate can even offer a center client room as a location for their first meeting. After providing a list and explaining the available options, another good question to ask is, “Do you have a sense of which of these adoption professionals you would prefer being connected with?”

In making a care connection, it is ideal for client advocates to obtain permission for the professional to reach out to the client, rather than simply providing the client with a list of professionals and their contact information. This is because the professionals are much more likely to follow through on initiating a connection than a client and the desire is for the client to truly be connected to the care she needs. If the client prefers not to make their contact information available to an adoption professional, the client advocate can provide a list of vetted professionals along with a list of [questions](#) that she can ask adoption professionals if she would like to contact others at a later date.



3. RESPECTS CONFIDENTIALITY

As we make connections between clients and adoption professionals, it is important to establish and maintain healthy boundaries. This helps build and maintain trust with the client. This means that when a client agrees to be connected with an adoption professional, the client advocate or other center representative can only share information permitted by the client. Depending on the client, this might be as little as the client’s name and contact information. The client’s story belongs to them and is something they may choose to share with the adoption professional—or not. It’s best to document these boundaries through a form such as the Adoption Connection Information Release signed by the client and confidentiality boundaries should be regularly reinforced through training provided to the center’s client care personnel.

[Download the Adoption Connection Information Release](#)



4. MINIMIZES RISK

Ideally, there will be multiple adoption referrals provided to each interested client. The [form](#) the client signs documents the information that the client advocate has already communicated to them, including:

- The adoption professionals are not connected with the pregnancy center
- The services the client receives through the center are not dependent on her/his willingness to meet with an adoption professional
- The center is authorized to share her/his specific information with the adoption professional
- The client releases the center from liability associated with sharing this information

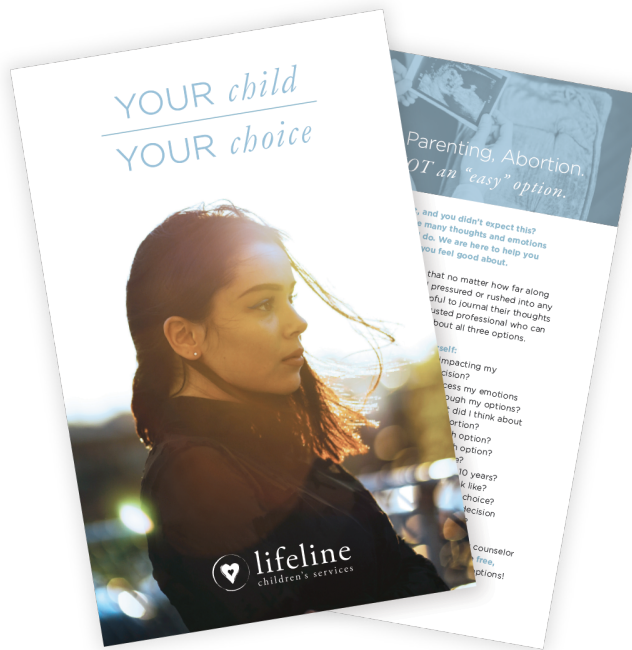


5. WORKS WITH A VETTED PARTNER

Each center is free to create their own requirements for partner adoption professionals---those the center will make a care connection with. While ideally multiple referrals are preferred, it is difficult to overemphasize how important it is that the adoption professionals be aligned with your values and be equipped to serve the client's best interest. Lifeline can be one of these partners and Christian Adoption Alliance also accredits agencies across the country who are committed to a Statement of Faith, Sanctity of Human Life, and other aligned values. However, here are several things to consider when choosing your partner adoption professional(s):

- Places children in Christian families only
- Provides non-coercive options counseling, supporting all life options
- Provides a separate advocate/worker for the birth mother that is different than the adoptive families' worker
- Provides face to face support to expectant and birth mothers
- Trains and equips adoptive families to meet the unique needs of the children and to honor an open relationship with the birth mother
- Helps navigate the open relationship with the adoptive parents
- Provides post placement support
- Provides training and support to you as a center
- Connects the client back to your center and/or other relevant resources if they choose not to move forward with adoption

Adoption professionals can be listed on the [Adoption Connection Information Release](#) form. The center's client advocates are trained to go beyond a basic referral and facilitate a relational connection between interested clients and these adoption professionals. This includes sharing the permitted information or form with the adoption professional quickly and following up to ensure connection is made. This may also include offering to contact the adoption professional and scheduling a meeting at the center.



FREE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU:

ADOPTION EDUCATION VIDEOS FOR YOUR CLIENTS

PRINT MATERIALS FOR YOUR CLIENTS

ADOPTION REFERRAL LISTS

REFERRAL FORMS

SAMPLE QUESTIONS CLIENTS CAN ASK OF PROSPECTIVE ADOPTION PROFESSIONALS

TRAININGS: LIVE OR VIRTUAL