

10 GUIDELINES FOR CARING FOR EXPECTANT PARENTS CONSIDERING ADOPTION

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Treat expectant parent like any other patient

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Defer to expectant parent for all decisions made in the hospital

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Make non-judgmental, unbiased statements

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Use positive adoption language

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Involve the hospital social workers - take advantage of their expertise

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Expect expressions of grief - this is normal

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Keep in mind every expectant parent is different, every story is different, every birth plan is different

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Understand that adoption is the most difficult decision parents will ever make

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Recognize that open adoption benefits the child, the birthparents and adoptive parents

10

Know the discharge process for adoptions

Guidelines When Caring for Expectant Mothers Considering Adoption

10 Things to Remember

1 Treat Expectant Parent like any other patient. Considering adoption does not change a woman's care.

2 Defer to Expectant Parent for all decisions made in the hospital. Support her in what she wants - she is in charge. If you don't know, ask her. Respect her right to confidentiality.

3 Use non-judgemental, unbiased statements. Ask how she is feeling and if there is anything you can do to help. Avoid statements such as, "You are already parenting, you can handle one more." or "Baby is so cute - you can handle this." NEVER say, "I could never give up a child."

4 Use Positive Adoption Language. Using Positive Adoption Language (PAL), also known as Accurate Adoption Language (AAL), shows respect. Use phrases such as choose adoption or make placement plan instead of give up, give away, adopt out; say parent the baby, instead of keep the baby.

5 Involve the hospital social workers and take advantage of their expertise. The social worker can provide support, guidance and expertise to a woman who is considering adoption, even if she does not have a plan and is not working with an agency or attorney, this includes coordinating with the agency to ensure that all hospital bills are handled appropriately.

6 Expressions of grief are normal. Tears do not necessarily mean that a woman is regretting her decision or feels she cannot "change her mind" - tears are normal. Listen to her. Refrain from sharing personal stories as this can cause added distress.

7 Keep in mind every expectant parent is different, every story is different, every birth plan is different. Give every expectant parent options, don't assume to know what she wants/needs, ask her what her birthplan is, if birthfather will be present in delivery room, and if she would like to have baby in the room or visit baby in the nursery. Allow her to make arrangements with the prospective adoptive family to be present before and after delivery, if that's her choice; ask if she wants the special mementos such as the crib card, hat, and footprints; do ask if she wants to name baby and, if she answers yes, what name she wants to put on birth certificate; and, do allow her to choose her method of feeding baby.

8 Please understand adoption is the most difficult decision parents will ever make. It is her right to to change her mind at anytime regarding her decision, even if the adoptive parents are already involved.

9 Open adoption benefits the child, the birthparents and adoptive parents. Adoption is not a "onetime transaction", it is a lifelong commitment.

10 Know the discharge process for adoptions. A clear policy, based on state law, should be in place and known to staff in order to avoid confusion and complications during discharge.