

Pregnancy, Parenting & Adoption



Information Packet

Options Counseling

Parenting Support

Adoption

Domestic & International Home Studies

Post Placement Supervision

402.661.7100 | www.LFSneb.org

 **Lutheran Family Services**
of Nebraska, Inc.



Welcome

Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska is proud to provide supports and services to ensure that all children grow up in safe permanent families!

Pregnancy, Parenting and Adoption (PPA) provides a continuum of services all guided by the deep seeded belief that children grow and develop most successfully in families. All PPA programming is rooted in the belief that the child is the primary client and supports and services are available to parents to ensure the best future for the child.

PPA provides supports, services and resources to expectant parents and families interested in adoption.

Table of Contents

Welcome & Overview	1
Options Counseling	2
Parenting Support	2
Home Visitation Program	2
Centers for Health Families®	3
Exploring Adoption	4
Preparing for Adoption	5
Infant Adoption	6
Adoption Home Studies	7
Post-Adoption Support	8
Helpful Resources	9-11
Notes	12

Pregnancy, Parenting & Adoption Continuum of Services

FOR EXPECTANT PARENTS

Options Counseling: Counseling ensures a safe exploration of options including, parenting, guardianship, foster care and adoption. Support throughout the decision making process is imperative.

Choosing to Parent: For expectant parents who choose to parent their child, counselors ensure that all mothers and fathers have the services needed to raise healthy children in healthy families. Services include additional LFS programs such as:

- Centers for Healthy Families®
- Home Visitation and
- Tuition Assistance Program

Choosing Adoption: For expectant parents who choose adoption, staff walk beside parents as they explore the options for their child. Staff also assist parents in learning about **open adoption**. **Post-adoption counseling** is also available.

If you are pregnant and have questions, please call 402.661.7100.

FOR FAMILIES LOOKING TO ADOPT

Preparing for Adoption: PPA encourages families to research agencies and the variety of adoption programs. There are children both near and far in need of a permanent family and it is important that families choose the best programs for them.

Infant Adoption: PPA educates, prepares and assesses families to be a resource to parents choosing adoption for their child. Families are prepared for full openness in adoption.

Domestic and International Home Studies: Staff provide quality and thorough assessments of potential adoptive families pursuing adoption independently of Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska. PPA staff are knowledgeable regarding home study requirements for both international and domestic home studies.

Post Placement Supervision: For families adopting through the LFS infant program, internationally or through another state, post-placement visits are required. LFS adoption staff are well trained and skilled in supporting families following the placement of children in the home.

Post Adoption Services: Right Turn® provides post-adoption and guardianship support for Nebraska's adoptive families.

If you are interested in adoption, please call 402.661.7100.

Options Counseling

Facing an unplanned pregnancy can be a very lonely, confusing and challenging time. For expectant parents facing this situation, staff hope parents will reach out to LFS for support. The PPA program offers free pregnancy counseling services in Nebraska and Pottawattamie County, Iowa. Counseling services are available throughout pregnancy and for up to six months following the birth.

At LFS we know how important it is for expectant mothers and fathers to have a safe place to discuss worries, fears and options. Our experienced counselors can help:

- Sort out feelings
- Consider options
- Provide support in making a decision to parent or make a plan for adoption, guardianship or foster care

We know this decision will be life-altering. We help process feelings and walk through all options that may be right for parents.

Parenting Support

At LFS, parents receive support in discovering their own strengths and help in identifying resources to meet their needs. When a parent decides to parent their child, staff will connect them to services to ensure a healthy pregnancy and help prepare for parenthood. LFS pregnancy and parenting staff ensure all mothers and fathers have the services needed to raise healthy children in healthy families. In addition to the support and counseling services available from counselors, LFS has other programs that will support parents to feel confident in parenting.

Programs include:

- Centers for Healthy Families®
- Parent Coach (Home Visitation Program — see more information below)
- Tuition Assistance Program

Home Visitation

For parents expecting or already parenting a child under 6 months old, LFS has additional supports. For families living in Douglas County—staff bring this free and confidential support right to parents. Home Visitation staff are privileged to help growing families succeed. *Call 402.504.1733 to learn more.*

For families who could benefit from?

- A closer nurturing relationship with their child?
- More confidence in parenting?
- Consistent support from a parenting coach?
- Convenience?
- Greater self-sufficiency/independence?
- Success for your child in school and life?

LFS can assist with:

- Parent-child activities
- Visits from a parent coach (*at home or site of parent choosing*)
- Child development information
- Connection to community resources (jobs, housing, food, etc)
- Developmental screenings





Centers for Healthy Families®

LFS Centers for Healthy Families® promote healthy family behaviors through parent education and support, family and community awareness, and early detection and intervention for improved physical and mental health.

Services offered include:

- **The Young Families Incentive Program**

Engages parents and children in healthy activities and parents earn points to “purchase” new and gently used infant and toddler items (such as clothes, toys, cribs, car seats, and diapers) at no cost.

- **Early Childhood Mental Health Services**

Child Parent Psychotherapy: Children ages 0-6 who have experienced or witnessed interpersonal violence or trauma.

Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT): Teaches therapy skills to enhance parent-child relationship.

Other services: mental health screenings, behavioral health therapy (up to age 21), and Kid Squad

- **Family Life Education**

Nurturing Parenting Program

Teen and Young Parents Program

Fatherhood Initiatives

For more information or to sign up, call:

Fremont: 402.721.1774

North Omaha: 402.504.1733

Pottawattamie County: 712.242.1040



Exploring Adoption

Choosing adoption as a plan is a very delicate consideration for expectant parents. LFS will provide a very clear picture of what to expect if parents choose adoption. In choosing adoption, parents will be in control of the process as staff provide the support and information necessary to move forward confidently.



Individuals and couples who are hoping to build their family through adoption are supported by LFS and complete a thorough assessment. Just as staff work to build a strong relationship with expectant parents, our staff spends time building relationships with prospective adoptive parents. This provides the best stability for parents, the child and the potential adoptive family. Choosing a family to parent a child is an immensely important decision. LFS is committed to providing expectant parents:

- A diverse group of potential adoptive parents through the LFS Infant Adoption program.
- Adoptive parents who have received quality training.
- Adoptive families with qualities desired and the family values wanted for the child.
- An adoptive family that feels similarly about the level of openness desired to have with the child after adoption.

Open Adoption

Open adoption means different things for different families. Each family chooses what is right for them. There are many benefits to openness in adoption – for children, parents and for the adoptive parents. Ongoing connections between parents and the adoptive parents, either through the agency or directly, can be especially beneficial for children. Our staff can help answer any questions about how open adoption has been a truly positive experience for many families LFS has worked with over the years.

After Making an Adoption Plan

We know the decision to make an adoption plan is very difficult and emotional. There may be many people in your life giving you their opinions about what you should do. We believe that this life-altering decision must be made freely by you and with your child's best interest in mind. **Relinquishment counseling** allows you to process your decision to choose adoption without any doubts. We want you to be certain you are making the best decision for your child.

Post-Adoption Counseling

Adoption is a lifelong process, and it is normal for parents to have an intense range of emotions. It is important that our experienced staff help find ongoing support from a mental health provider who is skilled in adoption issues and is trained in responding to the emotions that may be faced after deciding adoption is best. Lutheran Family Services has trained mental health practitioners that can work to support parents. *Learn more about Nebraska's post-adoption program, Right Turn® on page 8.*



Preparing for Adoption: Options to Consider

Find the Right Agency

Every adoption is unique, emotional, and personal. Before moving forward and submitting an application, families are encouraged to research the options. While LFS wants to help all families with their adoption journey, it is also important to be sure that Lutheran Family Services is the right fit for each family working with LFS. Families should talk with as many organizations as necessary and research their philosophy, service delivery, and program options prior to selecting one.

Families are encouraged to speak with the experienced adoption professionals at LFS to learn more about adoption programs and have questions answered. Contact our **Children's Services Center at 402.661.7100 in Omaha or toll free at 1.800.267.9876 .**

Find the Right Program

Adopting a child and becoming part of the adoption community will change lives forever. Families' hearts will grow in ways not known to be possible.

Before deciding to adopt, it's important that families consider their strengths. What are they especially equipped to handle? It is also important to ask about limitations. Are there financial, age, health, or relationship concerns? Are there limits to recognize and not to exceed? What special needs is the family uniquely qualified to deal with? Are there potential situations that would stretch the family's comfort zone beyond the boundaries? What does their heart say? Is there a reservoir of love and attention to shower a child with?

Think about who will fit: Infant? Toddler? Older child? Same race? Different race? Special needs? Domestic? International? Foster? When building a family it is necessary to think about what that looks like. Who belongs in that empty chair at the dinner table?

It is common for those new to adoption to start out with narrow expectations of the child they want to adopt, and then to expand their views as the education process proceeds. Experienced adoptive families have found it important for those starting the process to resist the temptation to quickly narrow the group of adoptable children that they would be willing to consider.

Additional Resources are available for professionals and parents on pages 9 - 11.

Infant Adoption

Birth parents across Nebraska need adoptive parents with whom they can entrust their newborns to provide a loving, caring family. As in all adoption, adoptive families receive extensive training and participate in a thorough assessment. There are specific eligibility requirements for families interested in infant adoption.

It is important to provide birth parents with numerous options for their child. Lutheran Family Services strives to maintain a pool of 25 families waiting for placement. Adoption staff provide ongoing counseling for both birthparents and the adoptive family, in addition to facilitating the relinquishment and placement of the child.

Pregnancy, Parenting and Adoption (PPA) staff educates and prepares families for full open adoption relationships with birth families.

Who is eligible?

Both married and single adult persons interested in Infant Adoption must meet the following requirements:

1. Reside in Nebraska (unless military) or in Pottawattamie County, Iowa
2. Be at least 21 years of age and under 45 years of age
3. Couples must be married for at least two years
4. Have major medical insurance
5. Not be pregnant or actively seeking fertility treatments
6. Be active members of a Christian Church

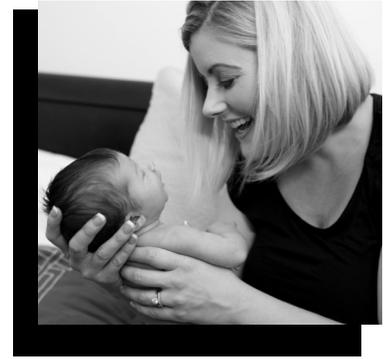
Where do families start?

Step 1: Prospective adoptive families contact PPA staff to inquire and gain initial information regarding the program and process. Additional information is also available at www.LFSneb.org.

Step 2: Families attend an informational meeting in the LFS adoption office nearest their home.

Step 3: Families complete and return an application.

Step 4: All applicants will be interviewed by PPA staff. Providing a diverse pool of families for birth parents is imperative. Decisions regarding which applicants will be invited into the program is based upon maintaining a pool of 25 waiting families and providing birth families options across demographics.





Domestic and International Home Studies

Under Nebraska law, licensed child-placing agencies must complete a thorough assessment (home study) of prospective adoptive homes prior to a child's placement. Home studies are available to families pursuing adoption independently of Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska. We provide the required home study report as well as post-placement supervision for families. Families pursuing international adoption must be working with a licensed international child placement agency.

What is an adoption home study?

The home study process allows staff to determine if a family is able to provide a loving, safe, nurturing, and accepting environment for an adopted child.

The home study includes:

- A minimum of six hours face to face time with the potential adoptive parents
- Personal references
- Employment verification
- Medical statements
- Various criminal background checks

The time it takes to complete a home study varies but is typically completed within 6-8 weeks. Timeframes greatly depend on the family's availability to meet and submit required paperwork, as well as, how long it takes to receive background check results. The home study is valid for one year and must remain current through placement. To keep a home study current and valid, a home study update, which includes a home visit and background checks, must be completed each year.

Post Placement Supervision

The state of Nebraska requires two face to face visits within six months of placement. For families adopting from another state or internationally, more visits may be required. In this time, LFS adoption professionals will support families through the adjustment period. Following completion of post placement supervision, LFS will prepare all necessary paperwork for finalization.

For more information, contact Children's Services at 402.661.7100 or toll free 1.800.267.9876.

Post-Adoption Support



Right Turn®, a collaboration between Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska and Nebraska Children’s Home Society, provides post-adoption and guardianship support for Nebraska families.

Right Turn® was established following the challenges presented after the 2008 original Nebraska Safe Have Law – including 36 children left at safe sites, 75% of whom were in guardianship or adoptive homes. Right Turn® rapidly expanded to meet the ongoing needs of families.

Six Core Services are provided to families across Nebraska:

1. Permanency Support Services
2. Respite Care Connections
3. Parent2Parent Network
4. Mental Health Connections
5. Training
6. Support Groups & Family Activities

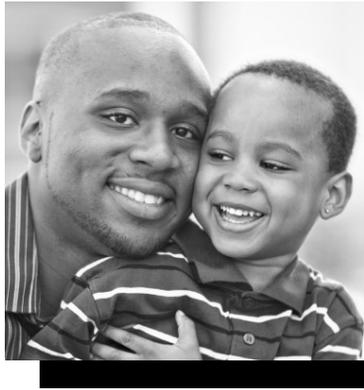
Right Turn® also offers A Step Further: A Model for Improving Family Relationships through Support and Intervention after Trauma and Loss. A Step Further takes what we know about attachment, brain development, trauma and loss, and healing and puts it into practice. Parents become part of the healing process for their children and begin to understand their child's behavior, mental health needs, and challenges differently.

Training opportunities are available for professionals as well as parents. A variety of topics are offered including, but not limited to:

- Adoption Matters: The Lifelong Impact for Children and Families*
- The Un-Diagnosed Diagnosis: Parenting a Child with Prenatal Alcohol Exposure*
- Untangling Adoption and Adolescence*
- Treatment for Families Impacted by Sexual Abuse*
- Preserving Cultural Connections for Transcultural and Transracial Families*
- Un-complicating the Complicated: Exploring the Importance of Maintaining Connections*

Learn more about Right Turn® supports and services at www.RightTurnNE.org.

For more information or to access services, call 888.667.2399, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Helpful Resources

Books

Adoptive Parenting

- Adoption is a Family Affair: What Relatives and Friends Must Know by Patricia Johnston
- Adoption Nation: How the Adoption Revolution Is Transforming America by Adam Pertman
- Adoption Parenting: Creating a Toolbox, Building Connections by Jean MacLeod
- Adoption Without Fear by James L. Gritter
- Dear Birthmother by Kathleen Silber
- Hospitious Adoption by James L. Gritter
- Raising Adopted Children by Lois Melina
- Real Parents, Real Children Parenting the Adopted Child by Holly Van Gulden
- Secret Thoughts of An Adoptive Mother by Jana Wolff
- Telling the Truth to your Adopted or Foster Child: Making Sense of the Past by Betsy Keefer
- The Family of Adoption by Joyce Maguire Pavao
- Twenty Things Adoptive Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew by Sherrie Eldridge
- Twenty Things Adoptive Parents Need to Succeed by Sherrie Eldridge

For Adoptees

- Birth Bond: Reunions Between Birthparents and Adoptees by Judith Gediman
- Being Adopted the Lifelong Search for Self by David Brodzinsky
- Primal Wound-Understanding the Adopted Child by Nancy Verrier
- Questions Adoptees Are Asking by Sherrie Eldridge
- Twenty Life-Transforming Choices Adoptees Need to Make by Sherrie Eldridge

Children's Books on Adoption

- "A" Is For Adopted by Eileen Tucker Cosby
- A Mother For Choco by Keiko Kasza
- Beginnings: How Families Come to Be by Virginia Kroll
- Brothers and Sisters in Adoption: Helping Children Navigate by Arleta James
- Did My First Mother Love Me? by Kathryn Ann Miller
- I Love You Like Crazy Cakes by Rose A. Lewis
- Jin Woo by Eve Bunting
- Over the Moon: An Adoption Tale by Karen Katz
- Tell Me Again About the Night I Was Born by Jamie Lee Curtis
- Twice Upon a Time: Born and Adopted by Eleanora Patterson
- Under His Wings: Truths to Heal Adopted, Orphaned, And Waiting Children's Hearts by Sherrie Eldridge

Trans-racial Adoption

- Brown Like Me by Noelle Lamperti
- Black Children, White Parents: Putting The Pieces Together by Tonya Moore
- Inside Transracial Adoption: Strength-based, Culture-Sensitizing Parenting... by Gail Steinberg

Helpful Resources

Twenty Things ADOPTED Kids Wish Their ADOPTIVE Parents Knew

By Sherrie Eldridge

1. "I suffered a profound loss before I was adopted. You are not responsible."
2. "I need to be taught that I have special needs arising from adoption loss, of which I need not be ashamed."
3. "If I don't grieve my loss, my ability to receive love from you and others will be hindered."
4. "My unresolved grief may surface in anger toward you."
5. "I need your help in grieving my loss. Teach me how to get in touch with my feelings about my adoption and then validate them."
6. "Just because I don't talk about my birth family doesn't mean I don't think about them."
7. "I want you to take the initiative in opening conversations about my birth family."
8. "I need to know the truth about my conception, birth, and family history, no matter how painful the details may be."
9. "I am afraid I was 'given away' by my birth mother because I was a bad baby. I need you to help me dump my toxic shame."
10. "I am afraid you will abandon me."
11. "I may appear more 'whole' than I actually am. I need your help to uncover the parts of myself that I keep hidden so I can integrate all the elements of my identity."
12. "I need to gain a sense of personal power."
13. "Please don't say I look or act just like you. I need you to acknowledge and celebrate our differences."
14. "Let me be my own person...but don't let me cut myself off from you."
15. "Please respect my privacy regarding my adoption. Don't tell other people without my consent."
16. "Birthdays may be difficult for me."
17. "Not knowing my full medical history can be distressing at times."
18. "I am afraid I will be too much for you to handle."
19. "When I act out my fears in obnoxious ways, please hang in there with me, and respond wisely."
20. "Even if I decide to search for my birth family, I will always want you to be my parents."





Helpful Resources

Movies About Adoption

- Abducted: The Carlina White Story
- Admission
- Annie
- Antwone Fisher
- Approved for Adoption
- August Rush
- Awful Normal
- Belle
- Beyond Acceptance
- The Blind Side
- The Book Thief
- Closure
- December Boys
- Despicable Me
- The Duchess
- First Circle
- From Place to Place
- Gracie's Choice
- I am Sam
- Jackie
- Juno
- Like Dandelion Dust
- Losing Isaiah
- Man of Steel
- Martian Child
- Mother and Child
- The Odd Life of Timothy Green
- October Baby
- Off and Running
- Oranges and Sunshine
- Philomena
- Pictures of Hollis Woods
- Precious
- Removed
- Sea Biscuit
- A Shine of Rainbows
- Short Term 12
- Somewhere Between
- Stuck
- Then She Found Me
- Unlocking the Heart
- What to Expect When You're Expecting
- White Oleander
- The Year Dolly Parton was my Mom

Websites with More Information

Center for Adoption Support and Education
www.adoptionsupport.org

Child Welfare Information Gateway
www.childwelfare.gov/adoption

Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption
www.davethomasfoundation.org

The Donaldson Adoption Institute
www.adoptioninstitute.org

Nebraska Adoption Agencies Association
www.adoptionnebraska.com

North American Council on Adoptable Children
www.nacac.org

Right Turn®
www.RightTurnNE.org

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Children Services

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