



Women's Life-Care Center

Committed to the Judeo Christian-based truth that every individual has the right to life from conception to natural death. Through lay counseling, education, and nurturing support, this ministry is dedicated to any person affected by a crisis pregnancy.

Your Options: *Parenting*

Welcome to being a parent! Whether your baby has already been born or you are newly discovering that you are pregnant. You already have a child which means that you are already a parent. This may strike fear inside of you but if you sit quietly for a moment you may find that there is a part of you that feels joy. That is natural, normal and ok.

But, how can I be happy about the life of my baby when I will be facing this alone? If you are asking yourself the question, "is single parenting in my future?" Please read on...

You might be asking yourself some of the following questions as well.

Where can I live with my baby?

Look into your housing options before you deliver. Some possibilities include living with a friend or relative, living with your parents or the birthfather's parents, living in a group home for single mothers, or living in public, subsidized housing (there may be a long waiting list). Look for a safe and affordable place to live. Consider childcare options in each situation. If you are a student, ask if your school offers daycare.

Can anyone help me get items for my baby?

Many churches and community agencies can help with needed baby items. Your counselor can connect you with parenting classes and other resources, including information about public assistance for medical and financial needs.

I don't want to be on welfare. Can I get job training?

If you are receiving assistance, you may be eligible for programs to help you with job training, tuition, and childcare. Otherwise, you must rely on educational grants and loans and work to cover living expenses and childcare. Parenting often means altering your goals and plans. With determination and job training, you can earn security for yourself and your baby.

How do I explain to my child why there is no father in our home?

Not having a father present may be hard for a child to understand. Explain that because of complicated circumstances, he is unable to be part of your family. Talk as positively about the other parent as you can without being dishonest. Even if you don't like him, he is someone special to your child. Respect your child's interaction with other male role models. How your child perceives caring adults of either gender will affect how he or she will relate to others as an adult.

Can I be forced to quit school?

Most schools encourage you to continue your education. Some educational programs for single parents offer night classes, loans, childcare, and even transportation. You may decide to take a semester off while you adjust to single parenting, but your educational goals are still reachable. No one will force you to quit school.

Can I still choose adoption later if parenting doesn't work out?

If single parenting becomes too difficult, you may consider adoption. It takes courage to realize that you cannot provide all that your child needs by yourself. But separating from a child with whom you have bonded with is difficult. A trusted and wise counselor can help you and your child through this. If single parenting becomes too difficult, you may consider adoption. It takes courage to realize that you cannot provide all that your child needs by yourself. Look for an agency that can help you make a loving adoption plan that you can feel positive about.

How do I get support from the birthfather?

The birthfather's legal responsibilities include providing financial support for your child. Most states have a child support enforcement agency that will withhold money from his paycheck if he is unwilling to pay. Your child is entitled to financial support. If, however, you cannot get child support, you must plan how you will care for your baby without it.

What rights does the birthfather have?

A birthfather does have rights in most states and jurisdictions. In some states, the birthfather's name is not even put on the birth certificate unless you want it to be. If he has signed a notarized paternity affidavit, he has legal rights, including visitation and the right to deny or consent to medical decisions for your child. Discuss his rights and responsibilities with your counselor, attorney, or your state social services department. You and the child's father should also discuss with each other your individual rights and responsibilities. A child's needs are best met when birthparents work together.

What rights do grandparents have?

State laws vary about grandparents' custody and visitation rights. By law, birthparents are the only ones who have rights and responsibilities toward the child. Grandparents, however, are important people in your child's life and history. They can be very helpful to you and your baby. Appreciate their help as a temporary solution. It is important for you to be independent if at all possible. If you do live with your parents, they may insist on a few rules.

(2004. Bethany Christian Services. www.bethany.org)