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Positive Adoption Language

A guide for using appropriate language when working with birth parents and adoptive parents

Appropriate Birth Parent Language

- Birth Mom
- Birth Father
- Birth Family
- Biological Mother
- Biological Father
- Chose adoption
- Created an adoption plan
- Chose to parent
- Terminate parental rights

"Creating an adoption plan" implies that birth parents thought about their options, created an adoption plan, and were responsible for their decision.

Inappropriate Birth Parent Language

- Real Mom
- Real Dad
- Real Family
- Natural Parent

"Gave up," "adopted out," "abandoned," and "put up for adoption" all imply that no thought or love went into an adoption plan. Birth parents lovingly place their child into a family.

Using the term "real" implies that adoptive parent relationships are somehow fake and not as important as biological relationships. Birth parents and adoptive parents are both real and important to a child. Both have meaningful relationships with the child.

- Couldn't keep
- Gave up
- Adopted out
- Abandoned
- Put up for adoption
- Rejected

Appropriate Adoptive Parent Language

- Dad, Mom, Child
- Adoptive Parent*
- Chose Adoption
- Build a Family Through Adoption
- Struggling with infertility
- Adoption triad/circle
- Parents
- Adoptee,* was Adopted
- Making Contact with

"I am not 'giving up' my baby, I am 'giving to' my baby. I am giving her life, love, stability, and two wonderful parents."
Birth Mom

Inappropriate Adoptive Parent Language

- Adoptive Parent, adoptee*
- Is Adopted
- Infertile, could not conceive
- Adoption Triangle
- Reunited with birth mom
- Children of their own

**In the context of the adoption process, in the hospital, or with both birth parents and adoptive parents, these terms are appropriate. When the child is with their adoptive family it is most appropriate to refer to the family as "mom," "dad," child."*