This past summer, The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) Committee on Ethics issued a Committee Opinion that clarifies best practice for physicians with regard to adoption. The articulated guidelines will benefit women and couples who are considering adoption for their babies. This article summarizes highlights from the recent opinion and shares its recommendations.

It makes sense that OB-GYN physicians, who are experts on infertility, pregnancy, and childbirth will be asked for advice and counsel about adoption. The ACOG focuses on the fact that a doctor’s primary duty is to his or her own individual patient, and that ethical and legal considerations guide this responsibility.

Five general recommendations have been put forth in the most recent Committee on Ethics Opinion (ACOG, June 2012):

- Physicians have a responsibility to provide information about adoption to appropriate patients. The information provided should be accurate and as free as possible of personal bias and opinions.

- A physician’s primary responsibility in caring for a woman considering adoption is to her and not to the prospective adoptive parents.

- Physicians should be aware of adoption resources in their areas and refer patients to licensed adoption agencies.

- When physicians complete medical screening forms for prospective adoptive parents, the physician’s role is to provide truthful, accurate information to screening agencies.

- Because of ethical issues related to undue influence, competing obligations, and lack of expertise, physicians should not serve as brokers of adoptions.

Physicians might find they are facing a conflict of interest when working with women (or couples) who wish to place their child for adoption as well as individuals who wish to adopt. The ACOG clearly articulates that it is not appropriate for physicians to serve as adoption brokers in any way. Many hospitals prohibit this activity. Further, adoption professionals are best left to the matching
Resources for Women and Men Considering the Adoption Option

**Sam’s Sister**
by Juliet C. Bond

Five-year-old Rosa becomes a big sister to a baby boy for whom their mother plans an open adoption. Excellent book for birth mothers to read to the children they are parenting.

**Rain or Shine**
by Hilary Horder Hippely

Finn has a happy life with his mother and father. Every summer he looks forward to the birthday celebration that will reunite him with his rich extended family, particularly his birth mother, Lisa. But when clouds threaten, Finn wonders how his much-loved birthday traditions can continue.

**Meet Our Professional Team**

_Friends in Adoption (FIA)_ is a network of dedicated, experienced, compassionate, and friendly adoption professionals. **Our focus is compassionate adoption.** Although their administrative office is located in Vermont, they provide free and confidential adoption services for pregnant women/couples anywhere in the United States. Their team members are deeply passionate about adoption, and many have experienced the miracle of adoption in their own lives. They all feel a personal connection with every adoption process. They cry and rejoice with every story. They have made a life commitment to adoption. They are friends in adoption.

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Founder and Director

**Tara Saltis**
Director of Finance and Agency Operations

**Kate Kaufman Burns, MSW, LCSW**
Social Work Supervisor

**Patty Smith**
Case Management and Outreach Supervisor

**Tracy Mullen**
Case Manager
New York Capital Region & New England

**Lynn Sakadolsky**
Case Manager
New York Capital Region & New England

**Nan Pasquarello**
Case Manager
Central New York & Pennsylvania

**Tina Bonney**
Case Manager
New York Capital Region and New England

**June Malkiewicz**
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**Beth Miller**
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Counseling & Outreach Rhode Island

**Ruth Laugman**
Outreach
Northern New York

**Lauren Kraver**
Outreach
Downstate New York and Connecticut

**Johna Harvey**
Outreach
New York City

**Sandra Schlosser**
Outreach
Vermont and New Hampshire
With more than 13 years of adoption experience, case manager Lynn Sakadolsky works directly with pregnant women and couples as well as with potential adoptive families. Lynn provides outreach and workshops in the NY Capital District and in New England. FIA is very lucky to have Lynn on its team.

“Lynn always goes the extra mile for her clients. She recently escorted a pregnant woman on an all-day trip out of the area to address the woman’s pressing family issues. In the meantime, Lynn arranged for the woman’s toddler to be supervised by a qualified caregiver while the mother was away and also set up community services and counseling for the woman. Adoptive families can rest assured that Lynn will conduct a full assessment of her clients’ requirements and that she will do everything in her power to make the placement experience a positive one. I love participating in a case with Lynn. She knows and understands her clients well. She provides incredible knowledge, care and support, and her clients love her.”

— Brendan O’Shea, attorney

“Lynn made sure that we were informed every step of the way. We always felt very comfortable that she was looking out for everyone’s best interests—including Gavin’s birth mother. Because of Lynn’s involvement, a period that could have been very difficult for all of us was filled with understanding and trust.”

— Hillary and Rob, adoptive parents

Lynn Sakadolsky
Case Manager
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Jessie’s Story

When I became pregnant I was in a whirlwind of emotion. My thoughts went straight to adoption. Luckily when I reached out to FIA, I was put in contact with one of the most beautifully spirited people, Lynn Sakadolsky. As I am sure most of you know, adoption is a loving journey but at many times can be very frightening. Lynn provided a safe haven of encouragement and support that was impeccable. Most of my contact with her was over the phone or via email but I couldn’t help but feel this radiating smile casting over me every time we communicated. When I did have the opportunity to meet her I remember waiting for her to pick me up from the airport. I sat on the curb soaking up the sunshine of the beautiful July day when she pulled up. That smile and positive energy was real. She gave me hope. She gave me a sense of normalcy; that what I was doing was something to share with the world. Not only was she a great support system but she was a master as my adoption coordinator. She was always one step ahead, making sure all our loose ends were tied up and I had everything I needed throughout the, what seemed like endless, adoption process. I couldn’t believe how organized and on top of everything she was. It was like I was graced with a personal angel to serve my every adoption need. Not to sound too sappy or anything, but I’m not sure I would have handled my adoption process so gracefully had she not been such a big part of it all. I am eternally grateful to her and all I can hope is that someday I can make someone feel as powerful and loved as she made me feel during the most delicate 10 months of my life.

— Jessie, a birth mother

NEW ACOG OPINION

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of birth parents and adoptive parents, so it is recommended that OB-GYNs not take on the practice of matching these parties. Rather, serving the individual patients, providing accurate information and medical screening, and referring them to expert resources are considered best practice.

A physician’s support of a birth mother’s plan can be of utmost importance before, during, and after placement. Adoption counselors and professionals often assist in helping birth parents negotiate the emotions that accompany the process. The ACOG opinion shares how in the past it was believed that it was best for a birth mother to not see or hold her newborn baby prior to placement. Today, however, depending on a birth mother’s wishes, she may choose to spend time with the baby, and even breast feed the baby. This contact between the birth mother and baby has been found to help make the adoption plan real, and help a woman / couple confirm the decision and help process the natural grief associated with placing a child for adoption. A physician’s knowledge of hospital policies and communication with the patient and staff can ensure proper care of a birth mother during this emotional time.

When asked how the new ACOG recommendations benefit patients considering adoption, licensed mental health counselor Laurie Coreno Reynolds, who specializes in adoption counseling, had this to say: “Pregnant women and teens often look to their Ob/Gyn for guidance and direction when dealing with an unplanned pregnancy. Physicians have an ethical obligation to be objective when talking to a pregnant woman about adoption and not allow their personal feelings to interfere.” Coreno Reynolds also offered that, “adoption should always be presented as an option, in the same way that all other pregnancy options are present. A woman facing an unplanned pregnancy needs to know there are choices if she does not feel she is prepared to parent.”

The ACOG has called upon OB-GYN practitioners to learn about best-practice adoption services and become knowledgeable about licensed agencies and adoption counselors who can be resources to pregnant women considering adoption. These physicians play a vital role in supporting an adoption plan if that is the chosen route of the patient.

The Committee on Ethics Opinion concludes, “Obstetricians who care for pregnant women considering adoption play an important role in providing the medical and emotional support these women deserve. Supporting these women through the process of relinquishing their children while sharing in the joy of the adoptive parents can be a challenge, but one that embraces the art and science of medicine. The obstetrician’s obligation to the pregnant woman, however, remains paramount.”

Friends in Adoption (FIA) works with both those interested in adopting and with pregnant women/couples considering placing their children with adoptive families. FIA has been providing these compassionate adoption services for 30 years:

- Keep the central focus of the adoption plan on the needs of the baby or child;
- Give attention to the unique needs of each individual involved in the adoption plan in a compassionate, respectful, and non-judgmental manner;
- Recognize that adoption is a life-long process based on trust, honesty and mutual responsibility.

Friends in Adoption Mission Statement

To read the full background and opinion, please visit the ACOG website and source for this article, via this link: www.friendsinadoption.org/blog/acog

Circle of Love

A group open to all birth mothers, birth fathers and/or pregnant women considering an adoption plan.

A free, confidential meeting in Clifton Park, NY.

More information is available online at friendsinadoption.org/events
Gary and Tracy are a fun-loving adventurous couple. In addition to “amazingly sweet, caring and loving”, Tracy would describe Gary as somewhat of a “gear head” as he loves his Jeep and racing car. Gary would say of Tracy that “she has the sort of personality that makes you smile to be around her”. Together they love to cook, travel, be outdoors, and spend time at their family camp on a lake in Maine. Though, being from the south, Gary is a St. Louis Cardinals and New Orleans Saints fan, and Tracy, being from the north is a Patriots and Red Sox fan, they are in it together! Their biggest wish is to share their lives with children.

Gary & Tracy

Amy and Ashley cherish their quiet times at home where they have a relaxing dinner and time to talk about their days. Ashley is a lawyer with her office just minutes from home, Amy is a photographer and documentary film maker who ends up on many exciting adventures. In their words, “Life is an adventure, a fun challenge and, well, just plain wonderful!” Neil and Naomi are so excited to become parents and share their love of life with a child.

Amy & Ashley

Neil and Naomi are a vibrant fun-loving couple from a large, quaint city in the Northeast. Their home is a three story brick townhouse with lots of windows and porches. Neil loves to cook and even teaches classes on cooking for children and adults. Naomi enjoys the arts and is always willing to say yes! to a new activity or adventure. In their words, “Life is an adventure, a fun challenge and, well, just plain wonderful!” Neil and Naomi are so excited to become parents and share their love of life with a child.

Neil & Naomi

Trish and Matt—“Parenting is the most important thing we will ever do. We will take very seriously our calling to teach, encourage and guide our children. We will raise our children as Catholics with those traditions. We will teach our children the difference between right and wrong and will ensure they get an excellent education at home and in school. We will instill a strong work ethic and the importance of respecting others and themselves. We will cherish each and every second we spend with our child and will give our full effort to make sure they are healthy, happy and have a wonderful and complete life. And we promise to love your child as much as you do.”

Trish & Matt

To view our complete, up-to-date list of awesome families, please visit www.friendsinadoption.org/families or scan the code below from your mobile device:
Todd, Theo and Lisa are a happy family of three (plus one cat and one dog), anxiously awaiting the chance to become a family of four. They live in a friendly neighborhood in upstate New York with plenty of space to run around or ride bikes. Lisa works part time and Todd is a college teacher and so have the time and a home environment that gives Theo the guidance and support so he can do his best. Todd, Lisa and Theo are so looking forward to another child to share their family, their love and their nurturing. friendsinadoption.org/ttl

Larry and Sam – Love has been the hallmark of their many years together. They have a keen desire to share their love, their zest of life and their adventurous sense of exploration by opening their hearts and home to a child. Their home is full of books and they eagerly await the opportunity to read bedtime stories aloud. Education has been a big part of their lives as has advocating for values of equality. Larry is in education and social work; Sam works as a director at a social justice organization. When they adopt, Larry plans on being a stay-at-home dad. friendsinadoption.org/ls

Kevin and Denise live in upstate New York in a lovely Colonial home surrounded by fruit trees and gardens, both flower and vegetable. As a couple they spend a great deal of time outdoors camping, fishing, boating and gardening. They have close-knit families and value the time they are able to spend with them. Holidays are wonderful times - Kevin and Denise, and the whole family, can’t wait to share these joyous celebrations with a child. friendsinadoption.org/kd

Heather and Andrew live in a small town in New England and appreciate the simplicity of life and the neighborliness of their community. They built their own home (with the help of friends and family) which is surrounded by five acres of gardens, fields and woods – lots of room to run and play. They love the life they have created together and are committed to their values: respect for all life, a balance of work and fun, and open mindedness. Together, they will provide a child with nurturance and love to help a child discover their unique self. friendsinadoption.org/ah

Dalton, Dean and Spencer have learned to put their energy into the things in life that matter and not to sweat the small stuff. They laugh, love and play every day. Dalton works part time in order to leave time to be at home caring for Spencer or volunteering at school as Room Leader and being on the Parent Student Association Board. Dean works in State Government and also enjoys sports and country music. Spencer will be a fantastic big brother offering his brotherly love and guidance. You can be assured that your child will be cherished, loved and nurtured by everyone. friendsinadoption.org/dds
WE BRING THE WORKSHOP TO YOU
Our workshops are open to any professional who may come in contact with a woman facing an unintended pregnancy — nurses, social workers, hospital ministry, and many others.

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We educate about adoption and its process to help your staff become more comfortable in raising adoption as an option to women/couples facing an unintended pregnancy.

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Please call us at 1-800-982-3678 to schedule a workshop and to request brochures to share with pregnant women/couples considering adoption.

WEED Workshops
1-800-98-ADOPT  1-800-982-3678
www.friendsinadoption.org
Call us today to request a workshop near you!

Workshop Topics

Presenting Options
This workshop provides an overview on talking to a pregnant woman about her options and responses to a woman who says, “I could never give my baby away…”

The Process from a Birth Parent Perspective
This workshop provides an opportunity for participants to hear from a birth mother or father who has made an adoption plan and what he/she found helpful or hurtful about the process.

Legal Issues in Adoption
This workshop discusses legal issues in adoption including financial assistance, birth father rights and the time period to revoke.

All About the Adoption Process
In this workshop, participants will learn all about the adoption process (private vs. agency; open vs. closed) and choosing adoptive parents and the legal process they must go through.

Adoption Language/ Effective Communication
This workshop helps participants learn appropriate adoption language and the importance of effective communication with a woman/couple considering adoption. This workshop includes role play.

Post-Adoption Contact Agreements
This workshop provides an overview of Post Adoption Contact Agreements (PACA) and discusses important topics such as PACA’s impact on the adoptee and legal enforcement.

Adoption – Then and Now
This workshop discusses how adoption has changed through the years and provides relevant information about current adoption practices.

Adoption Process: Hospital and Delivery
This workshop will provide participants information about the adoption process at the hospital and at time of delivery. Case scenarios are presented and specifically designed for understanding individual roles in a hospital setting.

Friends in Adoption Services
In this workshop, participants will learn about the compassionate adoption services offered by Friends in Adoption, a not for profit, domestic, infant adoption agency both pre-birth and throughout the child’s life time through the Compassionate Care Center of Friends in Adoption and under the supervision of the Founder of FIA.