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# ITK >>

# IN THE KNOW

Adoption Option Committee, Inc.

Estimated Presentation Time (Movie + PowerPoint)  
45 minutes + more time for Web Quest.

# Dear Presenter:



Thank you for sharing the message of the “In the Know” campaign! You are taking an important step in equipping young leaders with the information they need to be a supportive, reliable resource to their peers. Adoption is a complex and often emotional topic. But just because it’s difficult to talk about for some people doesn’t mean that it shouldn’t be discussed. In fact, we feel that it’s discussed and understood far, far too little. Shyness around the topic may explain why less than 1 percent of teens chose adoption when faced with an unintended pregnancy. The information you can provide – and the dialog you can spark – is critical.

Here are some pointers for making the “In the Know” presentation:

- 1) We suggest that you save the “In the Know” PowerPoint file onto your computer and have the DVD set up to play “Life Stories.” Having both files ready will ensure a seamless presentation.
- 2) Midway through the PowerPoint presentation, the screen will instruct you to play the “Life Stories” film. If, for some reason, you are unable to play the film, we suggest reading aloud or distributing the “Meet Mary” story provided here.
- 3) You may want to allow time for discussion after viewing/reading the real life stories. They are powerful and merit reflection.
- 4) “Let’s play the ITK Web Quest!” is an optional activity for classroom presentations where teens can take time to study the information at [itkteens.org](http://itkteens.org). The Web Quest questions (provided here) are also helpful for starting a discussion.

Please don’t feel that you are required to answer any difficult or personal questions during this presentation. The purpose of the presentation is to provide information and resources, not to provide life-decision counseling. As the presentation materials emphasize, many professionals – social workers and counselors – are available with just a phone call.

With heartfelt gratitude,

**The Adoption Option Committee, Inc.**  
Ph. 952-944-0866

# Meet Mel

My story begins the summer of 1999. I was enjoying living on my own and all the freedom that came with it. I was living recklessly with no regard to consequences or my body. Along came October and I started to feel different. I quickly found out that, at 19, I was pregnant! At this point, there was no turning back and I shared the news with my parents. To my surprise, they were extremely supportive and willing to help me through the next chapter.

With this new chapter, we found ourselves at a local adoption agency looking into options. I decided to meet with a social worker, who assisted in the decision making process. She was amazing. Without her, I would not have known what to do. It was not long before I knew adoption was the best choice for my baby and me. I certainly did not expect or plan on being a mother that young.

Within five months, we were discussing the type of family I wanted my baby to grow and learn with. I was given several profiles to look at, but after two, I knew who that family would be. Dave and Sue, a young couple, originally from Iowa that had everything I could have ever dreamed of giving my baby. In my eyes they were perfect and only hoped my baby would grow to feel the same.

When I met Dave and Sue for the first time, it was hard to fathom that I was looking at the couple that would be raising my child and discussing with them in what ways she would be raised. They were so eager to learn about me and to get a glimpse as to who their child would be. At this visit, we also discussed names. I knew that I was having a girl and had picked out a name that I wanted to call her. Ashlynn Elizabeth. They asked what, if any, significance there was with her name. I was open to them changing her name, but requested they keep her middle name Elizabeth, who is my sister. They honored that request and chose for her Sarah Elizabeth.

The next chapter brought pain and tears. Soon I found myself in the hospital preparing

for labor. I was scared and excited to finally meet this little girl who had been growing inside of me for the last nine months. After several hours of labor, I welcomed a beautiful little girl into this world.

She was everything I imagined. She had a head full of dark hair and smooth olive skin. Sarah was perfect. I chose to spend three days with Sarah in the hospital as part of my healing time and a chance to bond with her. The time was the perfect beginning to the rest of our lives.

The third and final day with her was the hardest. I knew that before the day was over, she would be leaving with someone else and I would have terminated my rights as part of the adoption plan.

Signing the papers was the hardest part of the last nine months. As part of my adoption plan, I had chosen foster-adopt, which meant she would need to go to foster care until everything was finalized with the paternity.

On July 5, 2000, she finally went to live with her new parents, Dave and Sue. I can only imagine their excitement. Through my pain, they were blessed with their first child.

The next couple years to follow were hard, but I was able to establish a relationship with Sarah and her new family. I had the privilege of seeing her every few months and was able to spoil her with gifts and love. I find her birthday and Mother's Day seem to be the hardest to get through, but in the end, I know she is where she belongs.

When Sarah was 4, she started to ask her parents questions about who I was and to my surprise figured out on her own that I was her mother. Dave and Sue have never hidden anything from her and are proud to let her know where she came from. I am blessed to have an ongoing relationship with Sarah and her parents and look forward to many more years of joy with them as a part of my life.

Though this decision came with pain and hours of tears, I have no regrets and would not have done anything differently. As I look back on the last seven years and look forward to the future, I am proud to say that this amazing story has changed how I live my life, made me who I am today, and who I will be in the future.

# Let's play the ITK Web Quest!



Read "Meet Mel" and answer the following questions:

What kind of response do you think Mel was expecting from her parents?

Why do you think her parents were supportive?

How could friends have offered Mel support as she went through this process?

Does Mel's story compare with what you know about adoption? Explain.

Look at the Q & A Section and answer the following questions:

What three questions do you think are the most likely to be asked by someone considering adoption?

Which answer surprises you most?

Look at The Fitting Room Section and answer the following questions:

**Old vs. new:**

As you know by now, all the questions are answered with a "yes." So, which three questions would bring greatest comfort to someone choosing adoption?

Why would counselors at agencies be crucial to working through this process?

**The steps:**

What is the role of the adoption worker?

What is one piece of information provided in this section that you already knew?

What is one piece of information provided in this section that surprises you?

**Types of adoption:**

What is a common theme of all type of adoption?

**Choosing a family:**

If you could add two other factors to the list, what would they be?

Go to the ITK cube to answer the following questions:

What is the purpose of 1-866-694-BABY?

How can Adoption Option help a person making an adoption plan?

Who is Colleen Tronson?

Go to the ITK Club to answer the following questions:

What is the value of asking a speaker to present information to your class?

What questions do you think would be asked of a speaker who comes to the classroom?



## Want more information?

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Or contact a local adoption agency.