

## ITK SUPPORT

When you want to be there for someone you know, but need some ideas on how to help. Scroll through some great ideas!

### Ideas to help your friend who is making an adoption plan

- Empower them to get all of the information they need
- Encourage them to go talk to someone who cares
- Be willing to listen without judgment

### Ideas to connect with the baby

- Give her a journal, and write encouraging notes throughout the journal
- Offer to make something with your friend to give to the baby like matching baby blankets – one for the baby, one for the birth mom
- Give stationery and stamps to use to write letters to child/adoptive family

### Throw a party for your friend

- Shower her with gifts for herself
- Give her a coupon book that she can use. Here are some ideas:
  - Free hug
  - Movie night
  - To talk about anything, but the pregnancy
  - To talk about the pregnancy
  - Free massage
  - Free pedicure

### During tough times

- Offer to have sleepovers when she is really having a difficult time
- Give her encouragement, and let her know that she is special, and has made a good decision
- Give her written affirmations or scriptures

## Q + A

Whether or not to place a baby for adoption is something only you can decide. But there are answers to your questions and many helpful resources to support you.

### How do I tell my parents, boyfriend...anyone?

It's important not to wait. Try to be simple and straightforward whether it is face to face, over the phone, or in a letter. You could tell them that you are trying to decide the right thing to do for the baby and for you. Maybe you could invite them to talk with a counselor with you to help figure things out.

### Where can I go or call for free help and answers - without feeling any pressure?

Email Adoption Option Committee at [info@aoci.org](mailto:info@aoci.org) for help. Most adoption agencies will offer free sessions to answer your questions without pressuring you. Agencies offer decision-making counseling, not just adoption planning. There is no cost to the birthparent for counseling services and services are confidential, even for minors.

### Is adoption a permanent option?

Yes, the child becomes permanently and legally part of the adoptive family with full rights to inheritance and a lifetime family relationship.

### Is adoption a way out for me and just a selfish decision?

No. Putting the child's welfare first is a true act of love. This is hard love—hard to decide—hard to do—truly caring.

### Are birth parents likely to feel sadness after adoption?

Of course they are. You may think about the child you placed for a long time. But the hope for that child's happiness, and the sure start in life you helped to give the child, can be a source of strength to you. Agencies can also offer grief counseling for birth parents struggling after placing their child. It's important to know people are there to help you through these difficult times.

### Do children belong with their birth parents?

Sometimes a birth parent just isn't ready or able to parent a child. Children need to be cared for day in and day out, year after year. They need a stable family. Adoptive parents may be better able than birth parents to provide a home.

### Will people think badly of me for choosing adoption?

Some may. There are different attitudes about adoption in our society. Perhaps no one in your family has ever "given up their own flesh and blood" before. It takes strength and courage to do what you believe to be right. Selecting adoption may be the most loving option you can choose. It is your decision.

### Can I get financial help with the cost of childbirth?

In cases of need, financial assistance is available for health care costs. Help for costs related to adoption may be discussed with your adoption agency.

### Will my baby be well taken care of?

Today there are thousands of couples who are unable to have children. They dearly desire to become adoptive parents and are ready to love and raise a child. Many are already waiting. They have been registered and approved by adoptive agencies. In most cases you have the option to be involved in selecting those parents for your child.

### Will I know how my baby is doing after placing him or her for adoption?

If you choose to have contact with your child and adoptive parents you will be able to plan how you will connect and receive information. This is something that can be in your control prior to choosing the parents.

### How do I get started?

Begin by asking yourself these hard questions:

- Am I able to meet a child's needs?
- Would I have to count on my parents to take over for me?
- Can I raise a child and meet my own needs? to finish school? start a career?
- Am I really ready to become a good parent on my own?

Hard love means thinking of the baby first.

### Want more information?

People are ready to help. If you would like more information about the adoption option, ask us.

Adoption Option Committee, Inc.

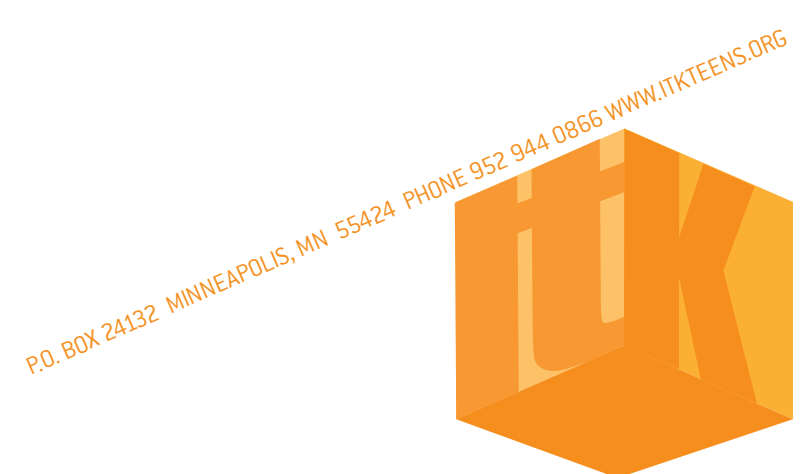
P.O. Box 24132

Minneapolis, MN 55424

phone: 612-944-0866

e-mail: [info@aoci.org](mailto:info@aoci.org)

Or contact a local adoption agency.



## FITTING ROOM

Teens can choose from several adoption options.

### OLD VS. NEW

If I find myself unexpectedly pregnant, abortion and single parenting are my only choices.

**There is a third choice, one that has proven to be a success for birth mothers and children—the adoption option.**

I would never consider adoption—it would be too hard.

**Which ever choice you make will present many hardships—adoption may be no more difficult than abortion or single parenting.**

My friends and family will think I'm terrible giving up my own flesh and blood.

**Adoption is not "giving up," it is giving to—a decision you have carefully made out of love for the future of your child and yourself.**

I'll never know what happened to my baby. I simply couldn't live that way.

**The old way of doing adoptions (secrecy and no control) is out. The new way—open adoption—allows you to make the decisions regarding the future of your child and yourself. (refer to Glossary of Adoption Terms and "Kristina's Story")**

Why adoption? Isn't it just for people who can't have their own kids?

**Not necessarily true. Yes, some people cannot biologically conceive, but adoption provides a family for a child, not a child for a family.**

Kids who are adopted have lots of problems.

**Not founded in fact. Refer to the Search Institute Study. Children who are adopted have, among other characteristics, high self-esteem and positive identity concerns at rates as high or higher than their peers.**

What about me? I feel it's my responsibility to raise my child.

**Your responsibility is to make the very best and informed decision that you can for your child. Studies show that birth mothers who make an adoption plan typically move on with their life, finish their education, have a career, and eventually marry.**

### QUESTIONS

If you are considering adoption, you may ask the following questions...

- 1 Does the adoption agency investigate adoptive families carefully?
- 2 Can I choose the adoptive family? Can I interview more than one adoptive family before choosing the family?
- 3 Can a relative or a friend adopt my baby?
- 4 Will someone help me to choose a family if I need help?
- 5 Can I pick a family without meeting them if I choose?
- 6 If I want no involvement with the adoptive family or my child, will my identity be protected?
- 7 Can the adoptive family be in the delivery room?

P.O. BOX 24132 MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55424 PHONE 952 944 0866 WWW.ITKTEENS.ORG



- 8 Can I spend time with my baby alone?
- 9 Can my baby go home from the hospital with the adoptive parents?
- 10 Can someone take care of my baby while I decide what to do?
- 11 Can my baby go home from the hospital with the adoptive parents?
- 12 Can someone take care of my baby while I decide what to do?
- 13 Can I ask for pictures and information about my child after adoption?
- 14 After the baby is born will counseling be available if I need it? After the baby is adopted? Later?
- 15 If the adoptive family or my child wants or needs counseling, will it be available?
- 16 Is financial help available?

The answer is "yes" for all of these choices.

The agencies provide counseling to help you explore these options and decide for yourself what is best for you and your baby. If you are not yet sure about adoption, or your other choices, counseling is available to help you explore all of your options. There should be no charge to you for counseling.

## THE STEPS

Anyone who is experiencing an unplanned pregnancy and is considering making an adoption plan for their child should first research different agencies that complete adoptions. It is important to find an agency that they're comfortable with. [Click here](#) for a list of adoption agencies in Minnesota. Next, birth parents need to contact the agency they'd like to work with. They'll be assigned a pregnancy counselor or adoption worker. This person's role is to help birth parents in their decision making, educate them about adoption, and help them prepare for the grief they will experience in making an adoption plan for their child. Once a person has contacted an agency and has decided on adoption, several steps need to be completed.

- 1 Every birth parent needs to fill out a Social and Medical history form. All agencies have these forms.
- 2 Once the background form is completed, birth parents need to begin choosing a family for their child. Most agencies have a large book with many families in it who are waiting to adopt a baby. Birth parents can go through this book and choose the families they want to interview. Sometimes birth parents may already know a family that they want to adopt. The family may be relatives, friends of the family, or someone else they know. Otherwise, birth parents can interview as many families as they would like, and can then choose the family from those interviews.
- 3 After the birth parents have chosen a family, they need to work on their Cooperative Agreement. The Cooperative Agreement is a document that helps birth parents and adoptive parents structure their relationship. It covers how much time they will spend together before the birth of the baby, in the hospital, and after the baby is with the adoptive parents. Birth parents and adoptive parents can spend as much time together as they choose.
- 4 When the baby is born, birth parents can spend as much time as they want to or need to with their baby. Most often, the adoptive parents take the baby home from the hospital. (This is decided in the Cooperative Agreement.

P.O. BOX 24132 MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55424 PHONE 952 944 0866 WWW.ITKTEENS.ORG



5 After the baby goes home with his/her new parents, the birth parents need to terminate their parental rights. This is accomplished in one of two ways:

- a. Signing of Voluntary Consents
- b. Court Termination

The pregnancy counselor/adoption worker will be able to tell the birth parents if Signing Voluntary Consents or a Court Termination is best.

6 After the adoption is completed, birth parents, adoptive parents and the child are able to maintain a relationship as agreed upon in the Cooperative Agreement.

## TYPES OF ADOPTION

### OPEN ADOPTION

Birth parents and adoptive parents meet, share information, and have ongoing contact, such as occasional outings and get-togethers.

### SEMI-OPEN ADOPTION

Birth parents and adoptive parents meet, and continue having ongoing contact, such as letters and pictures.

### FAMILY ADOPTION

Birth parents choose a relative to be their child's adoptive parents.

### CLOSED ADOPTION

Birth parents choose adoption, but do not have contact with the adoptive parents.

## AGENCIES

### HOPE ADOPTION & FAMILY SERVICES INTERNATIONAL

5850 Omaha Avenue North  
Oak Park Heights, MN 55082  
phone: 651-439-2446  
fax: 651-439-2071

### CHILDREN'S HOME SOCIETY AND FAMILY SERVICES

2230 Como Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55108  
phone: 651-646-6393  
fax: 651-646-0436  
www.chsfs.org

### CROSSROADS

4620 W. 77th St., Ste. 105  
Edina, MN 55435  
phone: 952-831-5707  
fax: 952-831-5129

### BETHANY CHRISTIAN SERVICES

3025 Harbor Lane N.  
Plymouth, MN 55447  
phone: 763-553-0344  
fax: 763-553-0117

### INDEPENDENT ADOPTION RESOURCE CENTER (WELLSPRING AGENCY)

111 3rd Avenue So., #245  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
phone: 612-333-0489  
fax: 612-332-1839

### NEW HORIZONS ADOPTION AGENCY

Frost-Benco Bldg.  
P.O. Box 623  
Frost, MN 56033  
phone: 507-878-3200  
fax: 507-878-3132  
nhaa@frost.polaris

### CATHOLIC CHARITIES/SETON

1276 University Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55104-3825  
phone: 612-641-1180  
fax: 612-641-1005

### NEW LIFE FAMILY SERVICES

1515 E. 66th Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55423  
phone: 612-866-7643  
fax: 612-866-5990

### LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF MINNESOTA

2414 Park Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55404  
phone: 612-879-5230  
fax: 612-871-0354

### ADOPTION MIRACLE INTERNATIONAL

19108 Kingswood Terrace  
Minnetonka, MN 55435  
phone: 952-470-6141

### AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOPTION AGENCY

Griggs Midway Building  
1821 University Avenue, Suite N-263  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
phone: 651-659-0460

### CARITAS FAMILY SERVICES

305 7th Avenue North, Suite 100  
St. Cloud, MN 56303  
phone: 320-650-1660  
fax: 320-650-1672

### CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF THE DIOCESE OF WINONA

phone: 507-454-2270  
fax: 507-287-2050

### CHILD LINK INTERNATIONAL

6508 Stevens Avenue  
Richfield, MN 55423  
phone: 612-861-9048  
fax: 612-869-2004

### CHRISTIAN FAMILY LIFE SERVICES

203 8th Street South  
Fargo, ND 58103  
phone: 701-237-4473  
fax: 701-235-1703

### DOWNEY SIDE OF MINNESOTA

400 Sibley Street, Suite 20  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
phone: 651-228-0117  
fax: 651-228-0038

### EUROPEAN CHILDREN'S ADOPTION SERVICES

6050 Cheshire Lane  
Plymouth, MN 55446  
phone: 763-694-6131  
fax: 763-694-6104

### FAMILY ALTERNATIVES

416 East Hennepin Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
phone: 612-379-5341

### FAMILY RESOURCE

2903 Euclid Avenue  
Anoka, MN 55303  
phone: 763-422-8590

### FOREVER FAMILIES IAA

2004 Highway 37  
Eveleth, MN 55734  
phone: 218-744-4734

P.O. BOX 24132 MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55424 PHONE 952 944 0866 WWW.ITKTEENS.ORG



**INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICES, INC.**

4940 Viking Drive, Suite 388  
Edina, Mn 55435  
phone: 952-893-1343  
fax: 952-893-9193

**LDS SOCIAL SERVICES**

6120 Earle Brown Drive, Suite 210  
Brooklyn Center, MN 55430  
phone: 763-560-0900

**LOVE BASKET, INC.**

3902 Minnesota Avenue  
Duluth, MN 55802  
phone: 218-720-3097  
fax: 218-722-0195

**LUTHERAN HOME CHRISTIAN  
FAMILY SERVICES**

611 West Main Street  
Belle Plain, MN 56011  
phone: 612-873-2215

**NORTH HOMES ADOPTION SERVICES**

1880 River Road  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744  
phone: 888-430-3055  
fax: 218-327-1871

**PATH**

2324 University Avenue, Suite 120  
St. Paul, MN 55114  
phone: 651-646-3221  
fax: 651-646-3363

**PERMANENT FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER**

1220 Tower Road North, Suite 101  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537  
phone: 218-998-3400  
fax: 218-739-4989

**REACHING ARMS INTERNATIONAL, INC.**

3701 Winnetka Avenue North  
New Hope, MN 55427  
phone: 763-591-0785, 763-591-0791  
fax: 763-591-9701

**SUMMIT ADOPTION HOME STUDIES, INC.**

1389 Summit Avenue  
St. Paul, Mn 55105  
phone: 651-645-6657  
fax: 651-645-6713

**UPPER MIDWEST INDIAN CENTER**

1113 West Broadway  
Minneapolis, MN 55411  
phone: 612-522-4436

P.O. BOX 24132 MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55424 PHONE 952 944 0866 WWW.ITKTEENS.ORG



## CHOOSING A FAMILY

In recent years, adoption has changed dramatically. No longer is it a world of closed files, closed doors and closed minds. In the past, a faceless agency would choose the "right" parents for your child, and birth parents rarely knew who would be shaping their child's future. Today, your loving decision to secure a better future for your child extends to choosing her adoptive parents, the people who will give shape and meaning to her life. Today, adoption gives you the opportunity to make your love known to your child throughout her life. While you may not be there to guide her, you will certainly set the course she will travel.

Choosing your son or daughter's adoptive parents will not be easy. An important first step is realizing that the decisions you make will affect your child forever. Take your time and live with that thought. Let it guide you.

Identifying the factors on which to base your decision is also necessary. Here are some adoptive parent factors you may want to consider. You'll very likely have some of your own, not on this list, that are very personal to you.

### **Values**

**Ethnic heritage/race**

**Religious beliefs**

**Education**

**Siblings**

**Birth order**

**Physical features**

**Health history**

**Pets**

**Occupations**

**Stay-at-home parents**

**Family life**

**Income**

**Chemical usage**

**Hobbies and interests**

**Home and neighborhood**

**Geographic location**

**Personalities**

**Openness in adoption**

And, of course, the "X Factor": that sense of connectedness and well-being you feel when you meet the right adoptive parents.

We encourage you to make a list of what's important to you in your search for the shapers of your child's future. Play an active role. Ask questions. Dig below the surface. Be comfortable in your decision.

Your choice will reflect your love always.

## ITK CUBE

There are people out there to answer your questions and help you if you are in a crisis. Use them.

### Emergency? Call 1-866-694-BABY

If you know of a teen who is pregnant and may be considering abandoning their baby, please know that a birth mother may leave her baby, up to 3 days old, at any hospital in Minnesota – anonymously, and without fear of prosecution.

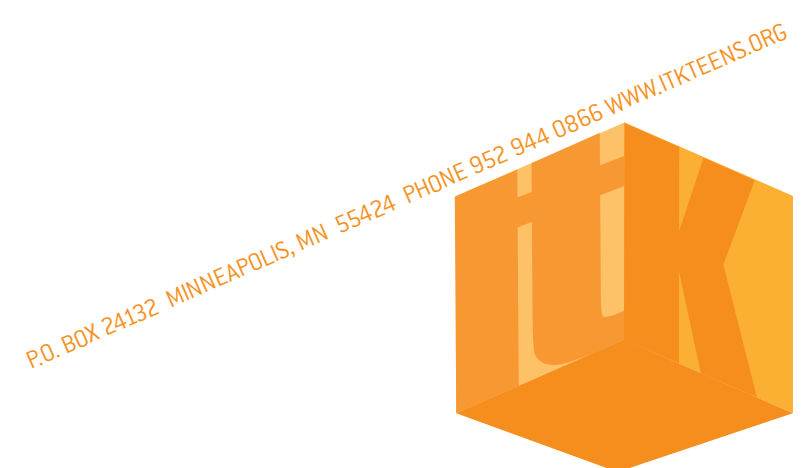
### Questions about adoption?

Colleen Tronson is available to answer questions within a timely manner at [colleentronson@earthlink.net](mailto:colleentronson@earthlink.net). She can speak with you about adoption options, school speakers, or just general support. If you have a crisis or emergency, please call 1-866-694-BABY immediately.

### Need financial help?

Anyone who carries a pregnancy to term and makes an adoption plan has made a series of loving and difficult decisions. She also has additional needs. Her emotions are under stress, and her supporting personal relationships are probably strained or absent. Her adoption plan brings additional expenses that are overlooked by governmental assistance and by insurance. She may be overwhelmed by the challenges of beginning her life over again.

Assistance is available by the Adoption Option Committee, Inc. (AOCI) subject to funding and to the appropriate nature of the grant request. AOCI's interest is to make grants that help Minnesota women who made an adoption plan build new and independent lives. Email us at [info@aoci.org](mailto:info@aoci.org) for more information.



## MEET MEL

Sometimes it helps to hear from someone who knows what you're going through. Read Mel's story about tough decisions and her success.

### The shock

I was 15 when I realized I was pregnant. My first thought was that my mom would be so mad at me. I cried and told her through my closed bedroom door. Well she got mad, but then she told me it was okay and we'd figure it out. It was really hard to tell her, but I couldn't figure it out on my own. Some of my friends have babies but I really wanted to stay in school and maybe even go to college.

### The plan

My mom and I went to see a counselor who told me the choices I had, and they were my choices to make, my mom said. My boyfriend said he didn't want to be a dad and didn't want his parents to know. And that was fine with me. Less people to fight about it. So I went home and made a list of things I wanted and things I didn't want. I knew I couldn't have an abortion. I think I'd always wonder if what I did was really right.

I also knew I had all these ideas about my life and a baby wasn't ever in the picture. There was no way my mom could help, she was already working 2 jobs and told me all the time to finish school.

### The decision

I had to go back to the counselor and ask a bunch of questions before I decided on adoption. Like do I get to choose the parents? What if they move away? Can I see pictures or send letters? I didn't want to give up all opportunity to know this baby - and I wanted to make sure she knew I was out there and was loving her.

When it came down to it my mom works real hard to give me a good life, but she wants more for me. I'd want more for my baby, like a family that can provide a loving and healthy home with stability.

## ITK CLUB

Download various files to help get your ITK CLUB started! Any questions? Just email [info@aoci.org](mailto:info@aoci.org).

### INTRO PACK

TBD

### IRON ONS

Get your hot ITK iron ons. Just [download](#) and print them out on transfer paper and you are ready to wear your own ITK apparel.

### POSTERS

We currently have two posters, one [8.5 x 11](#) and the other in [11 x 17](#), that can be downloaded and printed so you can get the word out about your next ITK event.

### PRINTED MATERIALS

The ITK BROCHURE is a good overview of choices and is a good resource to have as a hand out at schools, churches or your own small group. Email us today if you'd like us to mail you some of these brochures and let us know how many you'd need. To review a sample of this brochure download a pdf here: [www.itkteens.org/itktrifold.pdf/](http://www.itkteens.org/itktrifold.pdf/)

THE ADOPTION OPTION: IS IT FOR YOU? It is available in English and Spanish, and is intended to present a realistic and fair look at the adoption option. It is designed as a personal counseling tool to encourage teens experiencing an unplanned pregnancy to consider this option. It represents the generous cooperation and contribution of time and knowledge by many local experts, including major social service agencies in Minnesota. It has been distributed to selected physicians, all clergy and social service and governmental agencies in the Twin Cities area. Email [info@aoci.org](mailto:info@aoci.org) for more information on this piece.

### VIDEOS

ITK is excited to offer speakers to come to your school or organization. For more information on the topics covered and the speakers available, please email Colleen Tronson at [colleentronson@earthlink.net](mailto:colleentronson@earthlink.net)

### SPEAKERS

To communicate to a larger group, it is sometimes more effective to bring in speakers. We can help with that! Contact us and help organize an educational experience for your community. Some of the topics that can be covered are:

P.O. BOX 24132 MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55424 PHONE 952 944 0866 WWW.ITKTEENS.ORG



## ITK GALLERY

Scroll through some of the expressions. Want to submit your own ideas to the ITK Gallery? Simply mail your work to [facts@itkteens.org](mailto:facts@itkteens.org).

this space will be available for submissions in the future



## ITK HISTORY

### All about “In the Know”

In the Know is a new informational campaign dedicated to providing teenagers with unbiased, straightforward information about adoption. The campaign is the initiative of the Adoption Option Committee, Inc., a 22-year-old Minnesota nonprofit organization. The goal is to make sure teenagers have all the information they need to make a decision that is right for them if they or their friend experience an unintended pregnancy, without pressure or guilt.

In the Know equip teens with the resources and information through brochures, posters, speaker panels, and an interactive Web site at [www.itk teens.org](http://www.itk teens.org). In the Know also recently completed production of an educational video that will be shared with teens across the state. The video provides an up-close-and-personal look at the many faces of adoption. One young couple shares their experience of making the difficult choice to place their child for adoption. Another high school student talks candidly about her future, including what she would do if she experienced an unplanned pregnancy. In the Know plans to air the video on local television stations as funding becomes available, as well as use the video as a presentation tool with teens.

### Non-political, non-religious

In the Know is a non-political, non-religious campaign focused strictly on education about adoption. Because teen pregnancy is something not often talked about, In the Know aims to open a dialogue with those affected most – teens. In the Know volunteers will work with youth groups across Minnesota to raise awareness of this issue.

### About the Adoption Option Committee, Inc.

AOCI is a nonprofit, all-volunteer organization with a mission to promote a positive attitude toward adoption, to assure accurate and fair consideration of adoption planning and to provide financial assistance to birth parents who choose adoption. AOCI is not affiliated with either Pro-Life or Pro-Choice, but rather is Pro-Adoption only and exists as a separate and distinct choice. AOCI is not a political or religious organization. To support the organization, or to learn more, visit [www.aoci.org](http://www.aoci.org).

### Ways to get involved

In the Know is a program driven by and for teens. In addition to statewide outreach efforts, work is underway to create a Teen Advisory Council, which will address issues and concerns among fellow teens. In the Know is currently seeking motivated youths who are interested in volunteering to be part of the Teen Advisory Council to help educate others about adoption. To get involved, please contact Jenny Eldredge at 763-241-3925 or [jmeldredge@msn.com](mailto:jmeldredge@msn.com).

If your school, community organization or faith community has an active teen-focused group that would like to form an In the Know club, please contact Jenny Eldredge for more information. During the summer months, an intern will be available to work with teen organizations directly. The Adoption Option Speaker Panel is also available to speak with groups to build a better understanding of adoption. This is a free service. For more information, contact Colleen Tronson at 612.205.9593 [colleentronson@earthlink.net](mailto:colleentronson@earthlink.net).

P.O. BOX 24132 MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55424 PHONE 952 944 0866 [WWW.ITKTEENS.ORG](http://WWW.ITKTEENS.ORG)

The logo consists of the letters 'ITK' in a bold, sans-serif font, rendered in a 3D effect with a gradient from light orange to dark orange. The letters are set against a dark orange rectangular background that has a slight perspective, making it look like a block or a sign.

### Financial contributions

The Adoption Option Committee, Inc. welcomes financial contributions, which allow the organization to purchase advertising placement, printing, Web maintenance, and other expenses related to getting the In the Know campaign to as many teens as possible. Please contact the organization at 952-944-0866 or [info@aoci.org](mailto:info@aoci.org).

### Christiansen: Creative

All creative elements of the In the Know campaign were generously designed free of charge by design firm Christiansen: Creative, located in Hudson, Wis. Agency owner Tricia Christiansen, her team of designers and outside consultants, have worked with the Adoption Option Committee, Inc. over the past year to create the campaign. Several teen focus groups weighed in by selecting the colors, logo and graphics used. Please visit the agency's Web site at [www.christiansencreative.com](http://www.christiansencreative.com).

P.O. BOX 24132 MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55424 PHONE 952 944 0866 [WWW.ITKTEENS.ORG](http://WWW.ITKTEENS.ORG)

