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for Adoptive Families



Talking to your kids about their adoption

As parents, you always want to do what's right for your kids. Yet, adoptive parents walk a fine line when their children have a difficult adoption story. How much does your son need to know? How can you avoid overwhelming him when he's not ready for all the details?

Some children join their adoptive families through a beautifully-designed placement plan. Others have experienced incarcerated parents or heartbroken parents who made the selfless decision to entrust their child to another's care for the child's best interest.

Regardless, it's always your job to tell your child the truth about their adoption. Your child needs and deserves accurate information.

This could include:

- Telling your daughter about her biological siblings
- Explaining why she could not stay with her birth family
- Providing her birth family's medical and mental health history

Without the whole truth, your children may misinterpret their adoption story – focusing only on the negative – which can impact their identity development.

The following tips can help you decide when and how to tell your child about their adoption.

When:

- **Start now.** Even though an infant or toddler may not have the language to talk about their adoption, it's important that you openly and matter-of-factly begin talking about it. Don't plan a big reveal when she's older. This typically backfires, causing children to feel understandably lied to – even if you were trying to shield them from hurt.
- **Realize that this will be ongoing.** Your child will need to hear his adoption story many times throughout his life – even into adulthood.
- **Keep conversations age-appropriate.** Strive for honest, but less detailed discussions for young children – much like “birds and bees” conversations.
- **Share everything before adolescence.** Your child needs to have time to integrate this essential information into their identity formation.

“One good conversation can shift the direction of change forever.”

—Linda Lam

How:

- **Respond to the question your child asks.** Don't assume meaning beyond what he asks you. Ask for clarification if you need to.
- **Admit what you don't know.** Resist trying to fill in the blanks. Rather, admit when you don't know an answer and offer to try to find out.
- **Take advantage of teachable moments.** When movies, tv, and day-to-day family dynamics spark questions, use them to initiate a conversation.
- **Go to the source.** When your child is ready, read through her adoption paperwork with her word for word. If you have an open relationship with her birth parent, allow her to ask honest questions, as well.

Source:
Bethany.org/resources/talking-to-your-kids-about-their-adoption



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Check out our website (postadoptionrc.org) for past editions of our newsletter, events, helpful articles, and more information about us and services we offer.

All three Post-Adoption Resource Centers have many family fun events planned, as well as support groups and trainings. Please check your Post Adoption Resource Center region's Facebook page or website, watch for monthly calendars, or give us a call to find out what is available near you.

REGION 2

Bethany Christian Services
1055 Carriage Hill Dr, Ste 2
Traverse City, MI 49686
231-995-0870

bethany.org/traverscity
parctc@bethany.org

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REGION 3

Bethany Christian Services
175 W Apple Ave
Muskegon, MI 49440
231-733-1618

bethany.org/muskegon
parcfr@bethany.org

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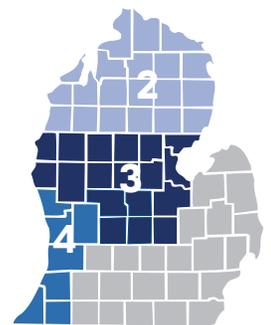
REGION 4

Bethany Christian Services
901 Eastern Ave NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-224-7565

bethany.org/grandrapids
parcgr@bethany.org

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