



## ADOPTION-SENSITIVE CLINICAL CARE



### Welcome to your May ASCC update!

This month, we're exploring why accurate, adoption-sensitive language is a vital component of trauma-informed counseling and care of patients considering adoptive placement for their child, in the adoption planning process, or who have placed a child for adoption.

Check out our training highlights, featured resources, video interviews, and more below!

## Training Highlight: Appropriate Adoption Language

Our choice of language has the capacity to empower or coerce, to validate or alienate, and to support or to shame. In **Module 3** of our *Understanding Infant Adoption* curriculum, we explore the power of language to support autonomous decision-making and neutralize stigma in patient care.

Even well-intentioned remarks can inadvertently exacerbate feelings of grief or shut down open communication. Our featured content on adoption language helps you:

- **Correct** outdated or harmful messages that create barriers to care.
- **Honor** the autonomy and choices of expectant parents.
- **Respect** all members of the adoption constellation through thoughtful terminology.

Through videos and interactive exercises, you will discover common examples of problematic phrasing alongside recommended alternatives that foster respect and understanding.

Access this content and build your skills with FREE CMEs, IPCEs, and Social Work CEs:

1.5-hour course

2.5-hour course

4.5-hour course

6.5-hour course



Get the Resource

### Featured Resource: Glossary of Adoption Terms

As you explore the Understanding Infant Adoption training modules, you may find that adoption—much like medicine—comes with its own specific terminology. Whether you are conducting a patient intake or facilitating a sensitive conversation, the **Glossary of Adoption Terms** is available as a reference guide to ensure your communication remains trauma-informed and respectful.



Earn Free CME/CE

### Free Supplemental Training: Adoption Then and Now

As healthcare and social service standards evolve, so must our approach to adoption. **This supplemental training** provides the historical perspective necessary to deliver high-quality, ethical care in a modern setting.

By examining the transition from past models to today's trauma-informed adoption practices, you will dispel common myths and misconceptions and strengthen your ability to support informed, autonomous decision-making.

## Provider Perspective: When is the Term "Birth Parent" Appropriate?



Watch Video

When does an expectant patient become a "birth parent"? The timing matters more than you might think.

As healthcare providers, our responsibility is to protect the patient's right to autonomous decision-making. By using the correct terminology at the correct time, we provide a supportive environment that allows a mom the space to confirm or change her plan without feeling prematurely labeled by her clinical team.

As registered nurse and hospital adoption care coordinator Jennifer Woolley reminds us:

*"Until she makes that decision and relinquishes those rights, if we put the label of birth mother on her, that's a really unfair expectation... it doesn't give her space to change her mind."*

Legally and ethically, a patient remains the parent until they formally relinquish parental rights—a process and timeline that is governed by state law.

## Birth Parent Perspective: The Language of "Giving Up"

Phrases like “giving up a child for adoption” diminish the complexity, intentionality, and love

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Adoption: Birth Parent Experiences research study highlighted how this terminology can reinforce adoption stigma:

“

*“... I really don't like the term 'giving up your child for adoption.' I think it has a lot of negative connotations and I think that it's very limiting and it's not really representative of what happens... So what I like to say is that I entrusted my child to her adoptive parents because that's a lot more reflective of really how I feel about the experience...”*

”

[Read the Full Report](#)

## Adoption Professional Perspective: Why "You're So Brave" Can Actually Be Harmful

Calling a patient "brave" for considering or choosing adoption can unintentionally imply that choosing to parent is a less noble choice, and glamorizing the decision can mask the deep layers of loss and trauma the patient is experiencing.

Our colleagues at The Adoption and Foster Care Clinic discussed this topic on video:



*“I get why some professionals [say these phrases]... They're trying to offer comfort. But you know, depending upon when those phrases are said too, it could even be coercive. Because in some ways it implies that, okay, if you choose to parent, you're not brave and you're not selfless, you're making the wrong decision... Women who are experiencing unexpected pregnancies or unplanned pregnancies, they're brave no matter what their decision is, regardless of whether they choose to parent or create an adoption plan.”*

Take a moment to hear from the practitioners at The Adoption and Foster Care Clinic on the language we use with expectant and birth parents, adoptive parents, and adoptees.

[Watch Video](#)

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