

## THE BABY FOLD

### PREGNANCY COUNSELING SERVICES

#### I. SERVICE OVERVIEW:

##### A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The Baby Fold, as a child welfare agency, recognizes the prenatal and early childhood periods of development as crucial to a child's well being. Counseling and support services are provided to expectant mothers and fathers for the following purposes:

1. To explore with the expectant parents their needs with regard to the pregnancy and the child's birth including:
  - a. Prenatal/Health Care
  - b. Employment, Training and Financial Assistance
  - c. Living Arrangements
  - d. Formal and Informal Supports
  - e. Community Resources
  - f. Education
  - g. Legal Services
  - h. Child Care
2. To assist the expectant parents in considering family planning options, including:
  - a. Parenting
  - b. Adoptive Placement
  - c. Transfer of Guardianship
  - d. Terminating Pregnancy

##### B. ELIGIBILITY FOR SERVICE:

Any expectant parent, regardless of gender, marital status, race, religion or age who resides in the 100 mile radius service area may receive The Baby Fold's Pregnancy Counseling & Support services. Individuals requesting The Baby Fold's services who live outside the service area will be referred to a licensed child welfare agency that can serve them.

If a client is under the age of 18 and is unable to obtain parental or guardian consent for pregnancy counseling services (PC. 1a consent to treat), the worker can provide only three counseling sessions to this minor.

In addition to the expectant parent, services are provided to extended family members and significant others if desired. The Baby Fold also accepts inquiries from parents following the birth of their child.

Clients may come to The Baby Fold office for counseling or a pregnancy counselor can meet with the client in the client's home community.

### C. REFERRAL PROCESS:

An individual may contact The Baby Fold directly to request Pregnancy Counseling & Support services, or someone else with knowledge of The Baby Fold's services may refer them. Common referral sources include personnel from medical facilities, schools, social service agencies, and churches, as well as family and acquaintances of the expectant parent. Pregnancy counselors and the Pregnancy Counseling Supervisor receive referrals.

### D. COUNSELING SERVICES:

The client's needs and ability to utilize counseling will determine the content and nature of counseling sessions. The client's age, race, culture, ethnicity, language, literacy level, family composition, religious orientation, mental capability, emotional stability, and maturity level are all factors for the counselor to consider in deciding upon an approach to use with the client.

In addition to assessing a client's needs, the counselor will determine which parenting options the client is willing to consider. The counselor provides nondirective, noncoercive, and non judgmental education, counseling and support services to help the client make her/his decision about their particular circumstances.

The counselor provides information on all pregnancy outcomes so that the client is well informed, so she/he can make an informed decision regarding the pregnancy.

Topics that typically require coverage in counseling sessions include the following:

1. Prenatal concerns:
  - a. Obtaining medical care
  - b. Fears about pregnancy, labor and delivery
  - c. Housing during the pregnancy
  - d. Education and/or work during the pregnancy
  - e. Relationships with the child's other parent, other family members and friends
  - f. Financial assistance
  - g. Childbirth preparation
2. Concerns about parenting:
  - a. Finances
  - b. Child care
  - c. Responsibilities of parenting
  - d. Physical care of the infant
  - e. Support system
3. Concerns about adoptive placement:
  - a. Understanding the legal process, including parental rights and responsibilities
  - b. Grief and loss

- c. Selection of an adoptive family
  - d. Involvement of other birth parent and significant others in adoptive decision
  - e. Openness in adoption
4. Concerns for the future:
- a. Promoting Positive Life Course Actions:
    - 1) Personal growth and maturity
    - 2) Interpersonal relations and communication
    - 3) Future goals and aspirations
    - 4) Coping, problem solving, and decision making
    - 5) Time, budget and household management
  - b. Effectively Utilizing Available Community Resources: referrals may be needed-
    - 1) Mental health counselor
    - 2) School counselor
    - 3) Substance abuse treatment
    - 4) Domestic violence treatment
    - 5) Sexual assault services
    - 6) Job training
    - 7) Child care services
    - 8) Food and nutrition services
    - 9) Transportation services
    - 10) DCFS child welfare services
    - 11) Public health department services
    - 12) Family planning services
  - c. Developing and expanding the client's informal support networks that could include friends, extended family, neighbors, and community members.

#### E. MEDICAL RESOURCES:

Good quality medical care is a primary need for all clients requesting pregnancy counseling services. The Baby Fold pregnancy counselor can assist clients in obtaining medical care.

Health Service Needs can include:

1. Prenatal care
2. Postpartum care
3. Genetic risk identification and counseling services
4. Labor and delivery services
5. Pediatric care for the child
6. Preventive health care
7. Dental care
8. Mental health care
9. Diagnosis and treatment of health problems
10. Nutritional counseling
11. Other recommended or required services

F. LIVING ARRANGEMENTS:

The client may identify living arrangements as an area of concern. The counselor can help the client examine various housing options if this need is identified, as well as adequate nutrition and safe shelter.

G. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:

The pregnancy counselor can help the client explore various means through which the client can meet her financial obligations related to the pregnancy. The client herself, the father of the child, or their parents may be in a position to pay these expenses.

The pregnancy counselor can refer the client to agencies that may be able to offer financial assistance. The primary provider of financial assistance for pregnant women and children is the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Public Aid.

If the client makes an adoption plan and The Baby Fold assumes guardianship of the child, the adoptive family for the child can pay for the medical expenses related to the pregnancy if there is no other means available to pay for these expenses.

If the client decides to parent her child, she will be responsible for all medical expenses. These arrangements are made quite clear to clients, their medical providers, and other family members who may be required to assume financial responsibility.

H. SERVICE TERMINATION:

The pregnancy counselor will be available to her clients throughout service provision until the client determines they no longer need services. Pregnancy Counseling clients who make adoption plans can re-convene services when needed throughout the lifetime of their adoption, as we understand that adoption is a lifelong process.