



Pregnant?

Working through
your options

This booklet is for people who have an unintended pregnancy (or those who work with them) and are unsure of what to do

To order copies of this booklet,
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www.fpnsw.org.au/pregnancyoptions



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Pregnant?

Working through **your options**

This booklet is for people who have an unintended pregnancy (or those who work with them) and are unsure of what to do.

"Pregnant? Working through your options" provides you with information about all of your options. It outlines some of the issues to consider, where to go for support and tools to assist your decision-making.

Finding out you are pregnant

Signs of pregnancy can include missing a period, feeling sick (nausea) or vomiting, having sore or larger breasts and feeling dizzy or tired, but not all women who are pregnant have these signs. It is a good idea to do a pregnancy test if your period is more than a week late. The length of pregnancy is measured from the first day of a your last period.

Pregnancy tests

If you think you are pregnant it is important to have a test to confirm the pregnancy. A pregnancy test can be done on a urine or blood sample. You can buy a urine pregnancy test from a pharmacy or supermarket and follow the simple instructions. The test can also be done at a Family Planning NSW clinic, GP practice, Women's Health Centre or other health service. The sooner you find out for sure, the more time you have to think about your options.

Pregnancy options

It is important that you take the time you need to make the best decision for you at this point in your life. Your decision will be affected by a range of things including your personal circumstances, support available and how many weeks pregnant you are.

The options with an unintended pregnancy are:

- **Continuing the pregnancy – choosing to parent**
- **Continuing the pregnancy – adoption / foster care**
- **Terminating the pregnancy – abortion**

It can be helpful to talk to someone you know and trust. Sometimes it is useful to speak to someone else.

If you need someone to talk to you can call:

Family Planning NSW Talkline 1300 658 886

Family Planning NSW Talkline is a confidential telephone and email service staffed by experts in reproductive and sexual health. Family Planning NSW Talkline is open 8.30am to 5pm weekdays for information and referral advice.

Further information is also available at www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline.



If this is a crisis for you, please make contact with:

Lifeline

13 11 14

24 Hours, 7 days a week

Lifeline provides a 24 hour telephone counselling service, online chat for crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services.

www.lifeline.org.au

Choosing to parent

This might be parenting with a partner or parenting alone. If the pregnancy has occurred when you are in relationship, you will most likely want to involve your partner in a discussion about the options.

Parenting with a partner

Whether or not you choose to get married, to live together, or to live apart, making the commitment to raise a child is a big decision.

It is important to talk to your partner about how you both feel about the changes to your relationship, income and lifestyle that raising a child will bring. It is normal to feel a range of emotions, and to be concerned about how you will cope. If you have no history of making joint decisions as a couple, or your relationship is rocky, the decision-making journey may be very new, difficult, or overwhelming.

Parenting alone

Some people may choose to parent alone and others may find themselves parenting alone due to the breakdown of a relationship or differences in how to proceed with an unintended pregnancy.

It is good to seek support from your family and friends and think about the support networks that will be available for you. If you are living with your family, you may be able to talk to someone at home, or perhaps you can talk to a friend or another person you trust. There is also more information about experiences of sole parents on raisingchildren.net.au/articles/parenting_alone.html

You may also be eligible for financial assistance if you choose to continue the pregnancy.

For information on the support offered by the Department of Human Services go to www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/payments-to-help-you-raise-children

Some questions to consider

- Is it the right time for me/us to have a child given other plans and responsibilities?
- Am I/we financially and emotionally ready for a child?
- Do I/we have the support necessary to raise a child?
- Am I/we okay with the thought of a long-term, committed relationship?
- Would we stay together if there wasn't a pregnancy?
- How could we maintain the best interests of our child if we did separate (now or in the future)?

Someone to talk to

If you feel you don't have anybody to talk to, counsellors can help you deal with the emotional and practical issues of raising a baby on your own or with a partner. You can find counselling and support by calling Pregnancy, Birth & Baby Helpline (1800 882 436) or the online service which provides information, advice and counselling about pregnancy, childbirth and a baby's first year.

www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au/about-pregnancy-birth-and-baby

Information about pregnancy care

For more information about pregnancy care you can contact the maternity unit of your local hospital and speak to a midwife or a social worker. You can also call Family Planning NSW Talkline on 1300 658 886 to talk to a reproductive and sexual health nurse. Talking to the nurse is confidential and anonymous.

Information is also available from: Pregnancy, Birth and Baby
www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au (Helpline: 1800 882 436)

Family Planning NSW has books available on this topic.
www.fpnsw.org.au/bookshop or www.fpnsw.org.au/library

It is important to discuss any medications you are taking with your doctor or midwife. You can also get advice from the Mothersafe information service. (NSW) (non-metropolitan 1800 647 848 or Sydney metropolitan 02 9382 6539)
www.mothersafe.org.au.

Your doctor or midwife can also advise you about the tests that are available during pregnancy to detect abnormalities.

Continuing the pregnancy and adoption or foster care

Adoption

Adoption is the legal process that permanently transfers all the legal rights and responsibilities of being a parent from the child's birth parents to the adoptive parents. Community Services is the government agency responsible for the provision of adoption services in NSW and they work with birth parents considering adoption and families who wish to adopt. Both the birth mother and birth father must consent to the child's adoption. Parents must wait at least 30 days after the child is born before they can sign the consent to adoption. The birth parents can maintain contact with the child through an adoption plan agreed with the adopting parents.

Today all adopted children have the legal right to know about their origins from time of placement. An adoption caseworker works with the adoptive parents to form an adoption plan that outlines the agreed upon details of how contact will be maintained.

If you feel you cannot cope with a child, adoption is not the only alternative. Other options include:

Foster care

Foster care involves your child being looked after by another family. There are different types of foster care.

- **Temporary Foster Care:** This can be used while you sort out accommodation, financial or personal problems. During voluntary care (not ordered by the Court) you remain the child's guardian and can see your child. Temporary care is usually limited to several weeks.
- **Long Term Foster Care:** If your child is in long-term foster care, you will lose legal guardianship and/or custody, but will still be the child's legal parent. Children often become emotionally attached to their foster family.

Information about adoption/foster care

Community Services provides a range of adoption services. You can discuss your options for the care of your child with a qualified and experienced worker (contact Adoption and Permanent Care Services on 02 9716 3000 or email: adoption@community.nsw.gov.au).

Further information about the adoption process and alternatives can be found at:

www.community.nsw.gov.au/docs_menu/parents_carers_and_families/fostering_and_adoption/adoption/are_you_a_birth_parent.html

Termination of pregnancy - abortion

Abortion is the termination (end) of a pregnancy by a procedure or medication that empties the contents of the uterus.

If you have decided to have an abortion you are not alone. It is estimated that one in four Australian women will have an abortion in their lifetime. Most abortions in Australia are carried out early in pregnancy (under 14 weeks of pregnancy) with very few occurring in later pregnancy.

There are two options for termination of pregnancy in Australia:

- **Surgical abortion** (which involves an operation, usually under a light anaesthetic)
- **Medical abortion** (which involves taking medications by mouth that cause a miscarriage)

Surgical abortion

Surgical abortion is available in NSW through private clinics and occasionally through public hospitals. In NSW you do not need a referral from a doctor to attend a clinic, which means you can call the clinic directly for an appointment. Some clinics only perform surgical abortions up to 12 weeks while others will perform abortions up to 20 weeks of pregnancy.

Before you make an appointment it is important to know how pregnant you are and what the clinic can offer. If you are uncertain you may need to have an ultrasound to check how many weeks pregnant you are. It is usually best to wait until you are six to seven weeks pregnant before having a surgical termination. If it is done earlier than this there is a higher chance of the procedure not working and the pregnancy continuing.

The surgical procedure is usually done while the woman is lightly sedated. This procedure involves the removal of the lining and the contents of the uterus by applying gentle suction to the inside of the uterus with a small, plastic tube. This is a safe, simple and low risk procedure when done by an experienced doctor. The procedure takes about 15 minutes, but you will need to be at the clinic or hospital for about four hours. Beyond 16 weeks of pregnancy a different procedure is used which can be more complicated and a lot more expensive.

Medical abortion

Medical abortion is available through private clinics, some hospitals and through some specialists and trained GPs.

Medical abortion is an alternative to a surgical abortion.

This involves taking medications and can be done in your own home.

It is usually performed when the woman is less than nine weeks pregnant. It is a two-stage process involving an initial visit to a termination clinic, GP or specialist who will prescribe an oral medication (a tablet), Mifepristone. A second medication called Misoprostol is also prescribed which needs to be taken 36 to 48 hours after the first tablet. After taking both of these medications the woman will then experience something similar to a miscarriage.

Most women experience bleeding and cramping that can be mild to severe. The cramping usually lasts about 24 hours but the bleeding may continue for about two weeks or more. Taking pain relief tablets is recommended. Having a support person is also important.

Other side effects may include:

- fever
- chills
- nausea
- vomiting

The staff at the clinic or the GP will discuss what to expect and give you a 24-hour aftercare phone number. A second visit to the clinic or GP is made about two weeks later at which time you may need to have an ultrasound scan to check the abortion was complete.

There are many reasons why women might choose between a surgical abortion or a medical abortion. That decision may be influenced by how pregnant she is, her feelings about having a surgical procedure and her feelings about having a medical abortion in her own home.

Surgical or Medical abortion: What is best for me?

Surgical	Medical
Timing Usually delayed until six weeks Becomes more expensive (and less available) after 11 weeks	Timing Needs to be done before nine weeks
Process Surgical procedure in a clinic Light anaesthetic usually required Procedure generally takes 5-10 minutes with up to four hours recovery time in the clinic Nil to light bleeding for up to two weeks Antibiotics recommended May only require one clinic visit	Process Medications taken in your own home Lead to similar effects as a miscarriage with cramping and bleeding up to 24 hours Cramping and bleeding may be mild to severe Bleeding usually lasts about two weeks but can continue for several weeks Pain relief tablets are recommended A second visit to the clinic or GP two weeks later is required to make sure the abortion is complete
Supports and recovery Advisable to have someone to take you home from the clinic	Supports and recovery Advisable to have someone to support you at home for at least 24 hours
Side effects - May feel tired/vague due to anaesthetic - May have bleeding and mild cramping which usually lasts less than two weeks	Side effects - Fever - Chills - Nausea - Vomiting - Bleeding and cramping as explained above.
Cost and availability - Most services are provided in private clinics - Cost is variable - Limited access to Medicare funded services	Cost and availability - Most services are provided in private clinics - Limited access through GPs and Gynaecologists - Cost is variable - Medication costs may be covered by PBS
Complications Complications are rare but may include infection requiring antibiotic treatment The doctor will explain the risks to you	Complications Complications are rare but there is a small (2-5%) chance that the abortion is unsuccessful and you will then need a surgical abortion The doctor will explain the risks to you

The cost of abortion in NSW

The cost of abortion in NSW is variable across clinics, so it is essential that you contact clinics directly to enquire about the cost. Many of the clinics will include the Medicare rebate in their final cost. Other issues that will impact on the cost are:

- whether you have a health care card
- how pregnant you are
- if you choose to have a surgical or medical abortion

Please be aware that the cost of surgical abortions will rise after 11 weeks of pregnancy and become significantly more expensive beyond 16 weeks.

The cost of the medication for a medical abortion is subsidised by the government but the consultation and ultrasound cost may add up to several hundred dollars.

The legality of abortion

Abortion is legal in all states and territories of Australia under certain circumstances and when carried out by a registered doctor.

Some states and territories have laws that require a doctor, or two doctors, to determine if an abortion is in the best interests of the woman.

You must have enough information to be able to understand and make your own decision to consent to the abortion.

Your partner or family cannot decide if you should have an abortion or not although it can be helpful to make this decision together.

If you would like more information about having an abortion (including if you are experiencing financial difficulties) please talk to your GP, Family Planning NSW clinic, health care provider, or a social worker.

You can speak with a reproductive and sexual health nurse at Family Planning NSW Talkline on 1300 658 886 or www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline. Talking to the nurse is confidential and anonymous.

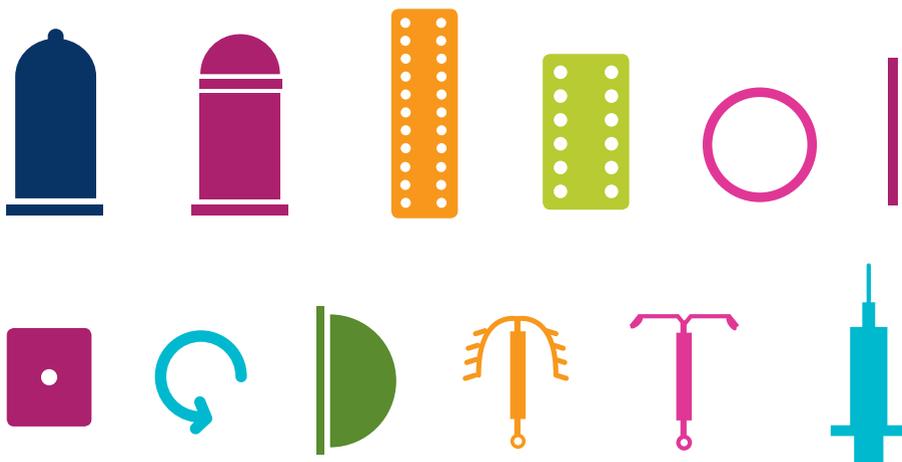
Further information is also available at www.childrenbychoice.org.au

Contraception

Whatever you decide, it is important to consider your contraception options for the future.

Contraception can be started immediately after an abortion or birth. There are many methods of contraception available but we know that the Long Acting Reversible Contraceptive (LARC) methods are the most effective. These include the contraceptive injection, contraceptive implant and the intra-uterine devices (IUDs).

More information is available at www.fpnsw.org.au/index_factsheets.html or you can speak with a reproductive and sexual health nurse on Family Planning NSW Talkline on 1300 658 886 or www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline. Talking to the nurse is confidential and anonymous.



Information for men

It is up to you how you will involve the man in the decision-making process and this will be affected by the current circumstances of the relationship.

The Family Law Act 1975 guides the rights and obligations of men who are able to substantiate proof of parentage whether or not the relationship with the mother continues.

Some aspects include:

- The financial liability of the father, once the child is born, can be negotiated by the parties or as directed by the Child Support Agency.
- The father has the right to a meaningful relationship with his child
- Both parties may be directed to participate in mediation to facilitate the development of a parenting plan

The pregnant woman is the only person who can (or cannot) consent to an abortion. No one else can make a woman have or not have an abortion.

Both the birth mother and birth father must consent to a child's adoption. For further information men can go to www.childrenbychoice.org.au/if-youre-pregnant/men-and-unplanned-pregnancy

How men participate in the decision-making process will differ depending on the circumstances of the relationship. You may want to attend counselling together or men may want to talk to someone to discuss their own feelings about the pregnancy. For further information about where he might find support Men's Helpline: 1300 78 99 78 www.mensline.org.au/home.html.

Making a decision

There can be a number of things that might affect the decision you make about an unintended pregnancy. If you are unsure of what to do, you are not alone. While some women know what they want from the outset, others can find the decision-making process difficult. You can record your thoughts and feelings below to help you “make sense” of what to do next. It might also be helpful to take the information you record to the GP, Family Planning NSW clinic, other health professional or support worker so you can talk through the issues.

There are many things to consider when making a decision and often this can be a stressful time. Some things that might help:

- Taking your time (within the limitations of your stage of pregnancy)
- Allowing yourself to explore and consider all the options
- Expecting that your feelings about your options and decision will change from day to day
- Accessing information about the practicalities to support your decision (for example available support networks)
- Asking “Is there anyone I can talk to while I make the decision?” “How might they react?” It can often be helpful to talk to a counsellor or other professional
- Looking after yourself physically and emotionally

Be kind to yourself and trust that you will make the right decision for YOU

How will this feel in the future?

Whatever decision you make is based upon your current circumstances and you might want to write down or keep records of your decision-making process. Circumstances can change over time and in 5 or 10 years you may look back and forget what the reasons were.

Recall how you felt when you found out you were pregnant?.....

A large, light purple speech bubble containing ten horizontal lines for writing.



How do I feel about...

PARENTING

I feel this way because _____

What more do I need to know about continuing the pregnancy and choosing to parent? _____

ABORTION

I feel this way because _____

What more do I need to know about having an abortion? _____

ADOPTION / FOSTER CARE

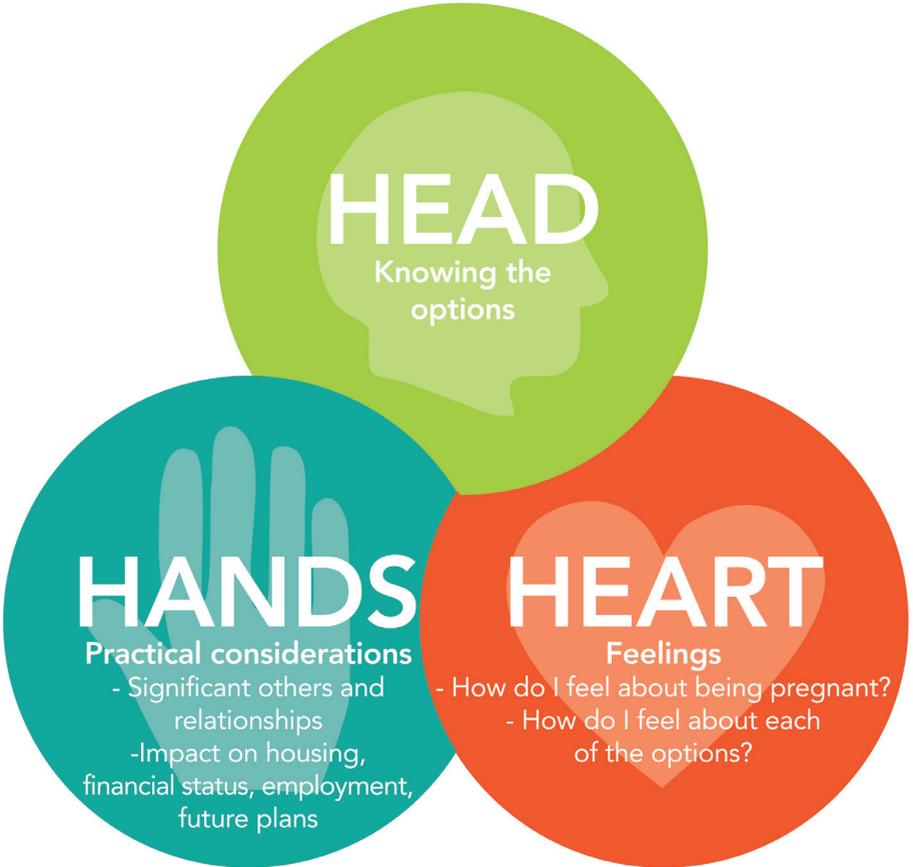
I feel this way because _____

What more do I need to know about adoption/fostering? _____

Things to consider

There are many factors that will influence your decision.

These might include having enough information about your options, the practical considerations for you and how you feel.



HEAD

Knowing the
options

HANDS

Practical considerations

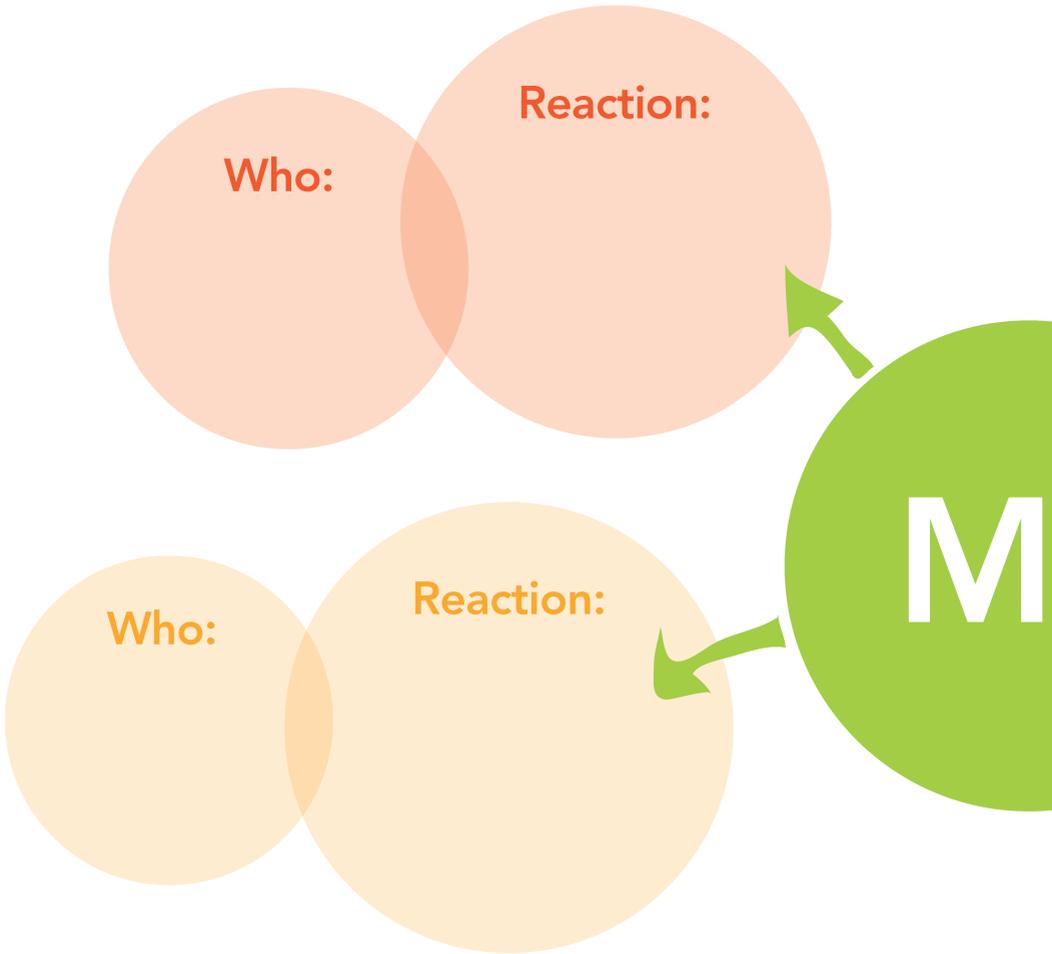
- Significant others and relationships
- Impact on housing, financial status, employment, future plans

HEART

Feelings

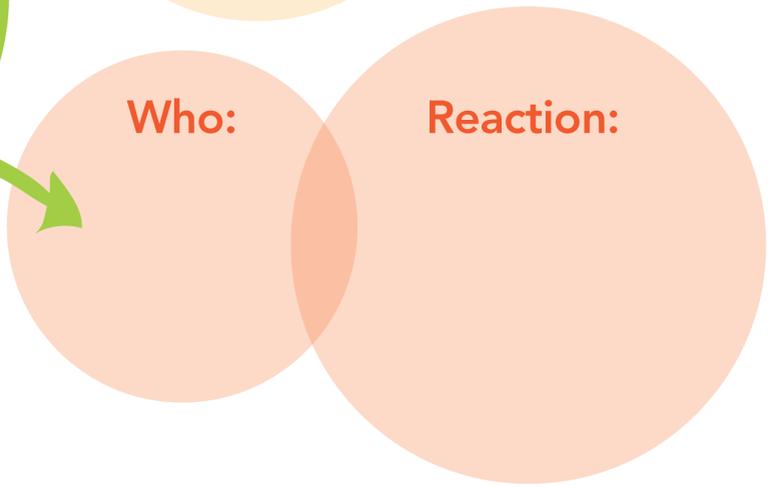
- How do I feel about being pregnant?
- How do I feel about each of the options?

Fill in the diagram to identify who your "key" people are.
How will they react if I tell them:



Relationships and support networks

The decision about what to do when you have an unintended pregnancy is yours but you might find that there are people now and in the future that you might want to consider as part of this decision-making. For example, a partner or family members that you will call on for support regardless of your decision.



Weighing it all up

The good things about:

	In the next 12 weeks	1 year from now	5 years from now	In general
Parenting				
Abortion				
Adoption / Foster care				

The difficult things about:

	In the next 12 weeks	1 year from now	5 years from now	In general
Parenting				
Abortion				
Adoption / Foster care				

Other decision making tools include:

<http://decisionaid.ohri.ca/decguide.html>

www.childrenbychoice.org.au/if-youre-pregnant/im-not-sure-what-to-do

If you would like to talk about your decision and/or find out about where you can go for counselling, please call Family Planning NSW Talkline on 1300 658 886 for information and referral advice.

Referral and resource information

For further information and support about pregnancy options please contact the following services. They have a range of information and help available.

- **Family Planning NSW Talkline 1300 658 886**
Family Planning NSW Talkline is a confidential telephone and email service staffed by experts in reproductive and sexual health. Family Planning NSW Talkline is open 8.30am to 5pm weekdays for information and referral advice.



Further information is also available at www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline.

- **Family Planning NSW Clinics**
Family Planning NSW has five fixed clinics in NSW (Ashfield, Fairfield, Penrith, Newcastle and Dubbo) where you can seek advice and support about pregnancy options. Further information about making an appointment is available from Family Planning NSW Talkline or at www.fpnsw.org.au/clinics.

Ashfield:

328-336 Liverpool Rd,
Ashfield NSW 2131
P: (02) 8752 4316
F: (02) 8752 4392

Dubbo:

2B/155 Macquarie St
DUBBO NSW 2830
P: (02) 6885 1544
F: (02) 6882 3666

Fairfield:

24-26 Nelson St
Fairfield NSW
P: (02) 9754 1322
F: (02) 9754 1676

Hunter:

Ground floor,
384 Hunter Street
Newcastle NSW 2300
P: (02) 4929 4485
F: (02) 4926 2029

Penrith:

13 Reserve Street
Penrith NSW 2750
P: (02) 4749 0500
F: (02) 4731 6787

For further information about pregnancy options

- **Children by Choice (Qld)**
(07) 3357 5377 (Brisbane)
Free and confidential support and counselling, covering all options for an unintended pregnancy. Children by Choice is a pro-choice and women centred service, providing non-judgemental and respectful advice. Access to their information line is available from 9am-5pm Monday to Friday. Further information is also available at: www.childrenbychoice.org.au
- **Pregnancy, Birth and Baby**
1800 882 436
Phone and online service providing information, advice and counselling about pregnancy, childbirth and your baby's first year. Includes access to 24 hour phone counselling for women, their partners, friends and relatives. Further information is also available at: www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au/about-pregnancy-birth-and-baby
- **Women's Health NSW**
(02) 9560 0866
Medical, clinical and counselling services available at a range of locations across NSW. Visit this link to find your local Woman's Health Centre:
www.whnsw.asn.au/

Counselling and support 24 hours

- **Lifeline**
13 11 14
24 Hours, 7 days a week
Lifeline provides a 24 hour telephone counselling service, online chat for crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services.
www.lifeline.org.au
- **Beyondblue**
1300 22 4636
24 Hours, 7 days a week
Telephone service providing support and advice around depression and anxiety for men and women. Online webchat is available 3pm-12am, 7 days a week. Visit the website for more information:
www.beyondblue.org.au
- **Kids Helpline**
1800 55 1800
24 Hours, 7 days a week
Free and confidential counselling service for young people aged 5-25 years. Counselling is offered by telephone and over their website.
www.kidshelp.com.au
- **Men's Helpline**
1300 78 99 78
24 Hours, 7 days a week
Telephone and online support, information and referral service.
www.mensline.org.au/home.html
- **Medical Abortion After-care Line**
1300 515 883
MS Health 24hr nurse after-care telephone service.

Counselling and community services

- **Relationships Australia**
1300 364 277 (NSW)
Relationship support service for individuals, families and communities providing services including individual, couple and family counselling and family dispute resolution. Ring the number provided, or visit the website to find your local service.
www.relationships.org.au

Young people

- **Headspace**
1800 650 890
Confidential online chat and telephone support for youth, between the ages of 12-25. headspace offers advice around general health, mental health, counselling, education, employment and alcohol and drug services. They also have a number of contact centres where you can access face to face support. For further information visit:
www.headspace.org.au
- **Youth Health Centres**
Specialised health services that offer a range of programs and services including health checks, sexual health and counselling. Please call Family Planning NSW Talkline on 1300 658 886 to find your local Youth Health Centre.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specialist services

- **Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS)**
An ACCHS is an incorporated Aboriginal organisation, initiated by and based in a local Aboriginal community, that delivers a holistic and culturally appropriate health service to the community that controls it. There are a range of services across NSW and details can be found at www.health.nsw.gov.au/aboriginal/Pages/contact.aspx
- **Relationships Australia - Aboriginal Service**
1300 364 277
Provides support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, individuals, couples and communities. www.nsw.relationships.com.au/en/ourservices/services-library/aboriginal_services.aspx
- **Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet**
Comprehensive, up-to-date information on varying topic areas accessible to people interested in the health of Indigenous Australians. www.healthinonet.ecu.edu.au

Disability specialist services

- **People With Disability Australia (PWDA)**
(02) 9370 3100 / 1800 422 015
TTY: 02 9318 2138
PWDA promotes the rights of disabled members of the Australian community.
www.pwd.org.au/what-we-do/our-services.html
- **Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS)**
(02) 9318 0144 / 1800 66 6611 (outside Sydney)
Services include legal advice, casework, advocacy, parenting help and education and training.
www.idrs.org.au
- **The Guardianship Division**
(02) 9556 7600 / 1300 006 228
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.
The Division conducts hearings regarding decision making processes, for adults with an intellectual disability.
www.ncat.nsw.gov.au/ncat/guardianship.html
- **Family Planning NSW Disability Resource Fact Sheets**
Provides easy to read fact sheets, for people with an intellectual disability. Some topics include pregnancy planning and choices, birth and contraception.
www.fpnsw.org.au/disability
- **Healthy Start**
Email: healthystart@parentingrc.org.au
Healthy Start aims to support parents with learning difficulties and their children by improving health and wellbeing outcomes through working with policy makers, practitioners and researchers.
www.healthystart.net.au

Men

- **Beyond Blue - Man Therapy**
1300 22 2638
Support telephone and website service for men's mental health.
www.mantherapy.org.au/

Practical support and information

- **Department of Human Services (Centrelink)**
Provides information about the range of Centrelink payments available if you continue the pregnancy. www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/payments-to-help-you-raise-children
- **Family Referral Services (FRS)**
Providing information and support and access to services, for families who are in financial distress and are facing challenges accessing services and support. Please visit this link to find the phone number for your nearest service:
www.health.nsw.gov.au/initiatives/kts/frs.asp
- **Family Relationship Advice Line and Centres**
1800 050 321
The Family Relationship Advice Line is available from 8 am to 8 pm, Monday to Friday, and 10 am to 4 pm on Saturday (local time), except national public holidays. Family Relationship Centres provide family dispute resolution (mediation) and advice to enable people to achieve workable parenting arrangements outside the Court system. For further information please visit:
www.familyrelationships.gov.au/services/frc/pages/default.aspx
- **Adoption and Permanent Care Services**
(02) 9716 3000 or email: adoption@community.nsw.gov.au
Further information about the adoption process and alternatives can be found at:
www.community.nsw.gov.au/docs_menu/parents_carers_and_families/fostering_and_adoption/adoption/are_you_a_birth_parent.html

For young people

- **ReachOut**
Online forums and information such as sex, relationships, mental health and wellbeing for young people. <http://au.reachout.com>
- **Talking Realities**
(02) 9794 2370
Collaborative support program working with parents aged 24 years and under, and their children. To make a booking and talk with their staff, ring the provided number or visit:
www.talkingrealities.karitane.com.au/about.php
- **Yfoundations – Youth Accommodation**
(02) 8306 7900
Providing information contacts for pregnancy and parenting accommodation services. Please access this link for accommodation service numbers: www.yaa.com.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=87&Itemid=122
- **Raise Organisation: Bump Program**
0426 972 473 or info@raise.org.au
A free program for young pregnant and parenting girls aged between 13 and 23, including weekly mentoring and workshops. For further information visit:
www.raise.org.au/programs/bump

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)

- 131 450
24 Hours, every day of the year
A free interpreting service provided by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to provide interpreting services for people who do not speak English and for agencies and businesses that need to communicate with their non-English speaking clients.
www.tisnational.gov.au/



www.fpnsw.org.au | talkline 1300 658 886 | bookshop

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