



ACCURATE AND SENSITIVE LANGUAGE CHOICES FOR ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE

Hurtful Choice	Informed Choice	Explanation
<p><i>Gave up</i> <i>Given up</i> <i>Put up</i> <i>Surrendered for adoption</i></p>	<p>Chose or made an adoption plan A child/youth for whom an adoption plan was made</p>	<p>The decision to make an adoption plan is extremely difficult and thoughtful. Even in cases where birth parents' rights are involuntarily terminated, significant planning occurs to find a permanent family for a child or youth.</p>
<p><i>Keep the child/youth</i></p>	<p>Parent the child/youth</p>	<p>People who choose adoption are not discarding their children but are unable to parent them.</p>
<p><i>Real/natural parents</i> <i>Real family</i></p>	<p>Birth parents or first parents First family or family of origin</p>	<p>There are no imaginary or unnatural parents.</p>
<p><i>Real/natural child</i> <i>Illegitimate child</i></p>	<p>Birth child Child/youth born to unwed parents</p>	<p>All children are real, natural, and legitimate. Lack of a genetic link does not make someone unnatural or illegitimate.</p>
<p><i>Is adopted</i> <i>Adoptee</i></p>	<p>Was adopted Person who was adopted</p>	<p>Adoption is an event, not an enduring quality of a person. Adoption is not a diagnosis or a condition.</p>
<p><i>Own child</i></p>	<p>Birth child or child who was adopted</p>	<p>All parents consider a child their own regardless of how they became a family.</p>
<p><i>Foster child</i> <i>Foster youth</i></p>	<p>Child or youth who is living with a foster family or who has experienced foster care</p>	<p>The emphasis should be on the child/youth and not the foster status.</p>
<p><i>Mom and Dad</i></p>	<p>Parents Guardians Family Caretakers</p>	<p>It is important for children to have their families validated. The better alternative includes different kinds of caretakers instead of assuming a mother/father pair (e.g., children/youth may live with single parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, foster parents, two moms, or two dads).</p>

Hurtful Choice	Informed Choice	Explanation
<p><i>Neglectful parent</i></p> <p><i>Abusive parent</i></p>	<p>Parent who is unable to meet the needs of a child/youth</p> <p>Parent who is unable to manage his/her own behavior</p>	<p>Children/youth who have experienced foster care or adoption do not want or need to hear their birth parents criticized. It is important for children/youth to understand what their parents were unable to do that resulted in their separation.</p>
<p><i>Drug addict</i></p> <p><i>Alcoholic parent</i></p>	<p>Parent who abuses substances (which impacts their decision making and ability to be responsive and responsible)</p>	<p>Children/youth who have experienced foster care do not want or need to hear their birth parents criticized. It is important for children/youth to understand what their parents were unable to do that brought them into state custody.</p>
<p><i>Unfit parent</i></p>	<p>Parent who is unable to meet the needs of a child/youth</p>	<p>There are many reasons that parents are not able to adequately care for children. Children/youth would benefit from having a clear sense of those reasons.</p>
<p><i>Unwanted</i></p>	<p>Unable to be parented by a birth parent</p>	<p>There can be a variety of reasons people are unable to parent their children. Desire is usually not a common reason and being described as “unwanted” is detrimental to a child/youth’s sense of self.</p>
<p><i>Taken away</i></p>	<p>Placed in state custody</p>	<p>The state, guided by law, has decided to remove the child/youth from his/her home for specific reasons.</p>
<p><i>Tracking down relatives</i></p>	<p>Search for information or relatives</p>	<p>Tracking down people could imply that they are unwilling to be found. Conducting a search can take many forms and can mean searching for information, people, or both.</p>
<p><i>Reunion</i></p>	<p>Making or keeping contact with a birth parent</p>	<p>Having contact with birth parents and relatives can take many forms and does not always lead to being reunited.</p>

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