

Pregnancy and Education

Let your school, college or training centre know that you are pregnant as soon as you can. You will need to make plans with your school or college for doctor appointments, time off after birth and possibly extra tuition outside school hours. Staff need to be made aware of your pregnancy as soon as possible for safety and insurance reasons (for P.E., school outings or work in laboratories etc.).

DO YOU KNOW? There is a home tuition scheme that can help you with work you might have missed before and after birth (if you are in an Irish secondary school). The Department of Education and Skills gives a grant to your school (or your parents) to pay teachers to come to your home for extra tuition. This is usually for a maximum of nine hours a week, for ten weeks. Talk to your principal or vice-principal as early as possible about arranging home tuition. They will write to the department on your behalf and will need to provide evidence of your attendance and some medical confirmation of your pregnancy and due date in the form of a doctor's note or hospital reference. For more information go to: www.education.ie/en/Parents/Services/Home-Tuition/

If you know you will be heavily pregnant or in hospital during exam time, it is important to speak to the college or school about making a plan to suit your needs during this time. Schools and colleges are usually very accommodating for expectant mothers and can arrange a separate room for you to take the exams, or perhaps extra time for breaks or even to take the exams in hospital. Whether you are already receiving One Parent Family payment or other social welfare payments, you can avail of the **Back to Education** allowance, which provides a weekly allowance to those seeking to return to second or third level education. Speak to an advisor at your local Social Welfare office about this option. Sometimes friends and family can help out with childcare while you are in education, but if this is not possible, it may be necessary to look for a professional service with trained staff.

Childcare & Education

Community Childcare Centres often provide subsidised places (lower fee rates) for parents with low income or those in second/third level education.

Campus Childcare is an option in some colleges where the childcare facility is on the campus of the college. These may also be subsidised, subject to means testing.

Other colleges might have connections or partnerships with local childcare facilities which may provide discounts for students. Contact your college as soon as possible about these options as places are booked up quickly.

Pregnancy and Legal Aid

If you are concerned about the legal implications of your pregnancy you can get free legal advice from **FLAC** (Free Legal Advice Centres). You can ring them on 1890 350250, or visit their website www.flac.ie

Free Pregnancy support services offer:

- 24hr phone support
- Free ultrasound
- Financial assistance
- Home visits
- Parenting classes
- Counselling services
- Pregnancy testing
- Female and male doctors
- An understanding companion for hospital appointments
- Free consultation with a doctor
- Free maternity/baby equipment
- Information on adoption
- Support throughout the adoption process

One of the organisations which offers these services is **Gianna Care**. You can call them on: 01 532 2116 or visit their website www.giannacare.ie

Sponsored by Family & Life, 26 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1. Tel: 01-8552145 Online: www.prolife.ie

Family & Life

Reflection Period

Why Go for Crisis Pregnancy Counselling?

An unplanned pregnancy is usually accompanied by clashing and demanding emotions, so you need time to reflect on your situation and sort out your thoughts to arrive at the right decision.

It can help to talk to someone who is not personally involved in your pregnancy and who has experience in finding answers to your questions. It is very important that you realise you are not alone at this time. A counselling session will give you:

- Calm in place of fear and panic.
- Time and space to work through your feelings about the pregnancy.
- How to deal with the shock and anxiety you may be feeling.
- The opportunity to discuss all your options.
- Help in telling your partner, parents and friends.
- Practical information on all your rights and entitlements, and the supports available if you are in education or if you are employed.
- Referral to other helpful services such as GPs, medical services, supported accommodation services or specialist adoption agencies.

Social Welfare Assistance & Entitlements

Know what financial assistance you are entitled to. If you are having a baby in Ireland, there are various benefits and entitlements concerning both employment and social welfare that you may be able to avail of, depending on your circumstances. If you need information about Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave and Paternity Benefit, Child Benefit, Health and Safety Leave, Antenatal Classes, Paternal Leave and other Social assistance, you can find it on the Citizen's Information website. www.citizensinformation.ie

Adoption

The crisis pregnancy counsellor can help you to begin exploring the option of adoption. You may consider or decide on adoption at any stage during the pregnancy, but no decision will be finalised until after the birth of the baby (see below). If you are considering adoption, your counsellor or GP will put you in contact with the local **Tusla Adoption Service** or an Adoption Agency accredited by the Adoption Authority of Ireland (currently the only agency is **Here2Help** based in Dublin).

The adoption Social Worker will discuss your reasons for choosing adoption, the consequences of your decision for yourself and your child, and your wishes for the baby's future family. They will support you through the process of matching your baby with an adoptive family and continue to support you until the adoption order is made official by the Adoption Authority of Ireland. You should discuss with your social worker the supports that are available for you after the order is made. After the birth you will be encouraged to care for your baby in the hospital. You will then take the baby home for a while or place the baby in temporary foster care with the support of Tusla or the adoption agency. This gives you time to keep in contact with your baby and to decide what you want to do. If you decide to go ahead with the adoption, the social worker will work with you to complete the necessary legal forms and to select a family. The baby will then be placed with the adoptive family. When the baby has been placed for a minimum of three months, the family will apply to formally adopt your baby and you will be invited to sign the final consent. An **Adoption Order** is normally granted after the baby has been with the adoptive family for a minimum time of six months. Social workers from the agency/Tusla will continue to visit the baby in the adoptive home to ensure that the baby is being well cared for and that the parents and the baby are bonding.



What if you change your mind about adoption?

After the child has been placed with the adoptive parents and before the Adoption Order is made, you can still change your mind and reclaim your child. In that case, you should contact your social worker or the Tusla-Child and Family Agency Adoption Services as soon as you can to have the child returned to your care.

Pregnancy & Work

DO YOU KNOW? If you work in Ireland (including casual workers) you are entitled to a basic period of maternity leave from employment, regardless of how long you have been working for an organisation or the number of hours per week you work. You are entitled to 26 weeks' maternity leave together with 16 weeks' additional unpaid maternity leave. You must give your employer at least 4 weeks' written notice before the maternity leave is due to start. At the time of notification, you must produce a medical certificate confirming the pregnancy and specifying the expected week of commencement of maternity leave for your employer. For more information, please visit the Citizens Information Website www.citizensinformation.ie

The **Maternity Protection Act**, the **Parental Leave Act** and the **Employment Equality Acts** protect you from discrimination on the basis of your pregnancy or status as a parent. If you feel that you are being discriminated against because of a pregnancy or your decision to become a parent, the Equality Authority can give you information and advice. You can find more information at www.ihrec.ie