

FACILITATING ADOPTIONS

BACKGROUND

Physicians must make professional decisions based upon the best interests of the patient and must ensure that their own personal interests do not conflict or appear to conflict with the interests of the patient. An ethical physician will avoid conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest.

Prospective adoptive parents may communicate with physicians about their wish to adopt in the hope or expectation that the physician will facilitate a private adoption with a birth mother who is a patient of the physician. Physicians should be aware that if a physician provides information about prospective adoptive parents to a patient:

- a) the patient may perceive the private adoption as the “best” option or “required”. This may lead a patient to alter course with respect to other options, and accept the prospective adoptive parents introduced by the physician.
- b) the physician may be perceived as endorsing the specific individuals as parents.
- c) if a member of the physician’s family (including extended family) or a friend or colleague is presented as a prospective adoptive parent, a serious conflict of interest arises.

SCOPE

This Statement applies to all approaches of any nature made by prospective adoptive parents to physicians with respect to facilitating private adoptions.

REQUIREMENTS

- In presenting options to a patient with an unwanted pregnancy, the ethical physician will recognize that:
 - a. it is highly probable that a pregnant child or woman considering options with respect to an unwanted pregnancy is extremely vulnerable, and
 - b. the physician is in a position of authority and influence over the patient.
- When discussing private adoption as an option for the patient, the ethical physician will refer the patient only to public or private agencies that deal with private adoption matters, such as Child & Family Services, Adoption Options, or others. The ethical physician will not engage in private referrals of his/her patients to prospective adoptive parents.

No. 168

- Physicians must not under any circumstances:
 - provide to a patient a profile or other documents indicating that a member of the physician's family (including extended family) or a friend or colleague wishes to adopt.
 - otherwise facilitate the adoption of a patient's child by a member of the physician's family (including extended family) or a friend or colleague.

First Print L&E/10-02

A statement is a formal position of the College with which members shall comply.