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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 1601**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 29 APRIL 2022**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NUMBER: 15 - 2022**

**1601. Mrs G Opperman (DA) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

In light of the fact that a person may only be 18 years old before they can relinquish their parental right, therefore enabling such a person’s child to be adopted, what assistance is there then for teen mothers who don't want their babies and/or are unable to care for them? NW1927E

**REPLY:**

Teen mothers who do not want their babies and / or are unable to care for them are assisted by providing them with the necessary support services and intensive counselling, where information on all the options available are explored with them, including taking care for their babies as a priority, with availability of resources such as social grants and family support system to assist them. Other options to consider is kinship care, foster care and adoption. Option counselling is provided to these teen mothers, to assist them to make an informed decision on what will be in their best interest and more particularly the best interest of their babies.

If adoption is opted for, adoption counselling is provided to the teen mothers. The Children’s Act 38 of 2005 in section 233 indicates that a child may be adopted only if consent for adoption has been given by each parent of the child and counselling must be provided before consent to the adoption is granted. Therefore, counselling assists teen mothers to understand what adoption is, its legal implications

including the right of the biological father of the child to consent for the adoption of the child. If adoption is finally being considered, teen mothers are well prepared about the process of signing of consent for adoption of their babies at the Children’s Court, where they are informed about the implications thereof and the 60 days period if they wish to withdraw their consent for adoption.

The Children’s Act in section 233 further provides that if the parent is a child, that parent has to be assisted by his or her guardian. Hence, teen mothers’ parents or guardians must be involved if possible in the counselling and when consent to the adoption is signed at Court. This allows the parents or guardians to support their children to ensure that they are making informed choices and understand the consequences of signing consent to the adoption of their babies. This ensures that teen mothers have the support system that would go beyond giving their babies up for adoption.

Support services are further provided to teen mothers after signing of consent to assist them to deal and cope with the reality of giving up their children for adoption and are referred to appropriate resources or other professionals to assist them, where necessary.