

Parenting Options for LGBTQ People



Pathways to Parenthood

This info sheet provides general information about LGBTQ parenting options for LGBTQ people, their family and friends. More information on each of these pathways to parenthood is available on our website. LGBTQ people become parents in lots of different ways. While many LGBTQ parents planned to become parents as LGBTQ people, not all LGBTQ families are planned.

Adoption

Adoption is a legal process where parental rights and responsibilities are permanently transferred to the adoptive parent or parents. Adoptive parents have the same legal rights and responsibilities as any other parent. Before they are matched with a child, prospective parents must complete both a homestudy and a training program.

Adoption can be public or private in Canada.

Public adoption

Most adoptions in Ontario are public adoptions. Children available for adoption through the public system were either placed by their birth parents or were removed from their birth family's care by Children's Aid Societies. Public adoption typically involves children over the age of a year.

Public adoption is free, though you should expect up to \$2,000 in costs related directly to the adoption, such as criminal background checks and other document fees.

Private adoption

Most private adoptions are of infants. Birth families place infants for adoption and choose the the best family for their child. Depending on the timing of the birth parent making an adoption plan, adoptive parents may be able to be involved in the pregnancy, birth, and be placed with their child immediately after birth.

Adoptive families pay all of the costs, which include PRIDE training, the homestudy, counselling for the birth family, legal fees, and fees for the adoption workers and adoption licensee. The fees in private adoption vary, but adoptive parents should anticipate \$10,000-30,000 in fees.

More information on Adoption in Ontario

Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services - www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/adoption/index.aspx

Adoption Council of Ontario - www.adoption.on.ca

Planning to become a parent?

We can help! We provide information and resources for LGBTQ parents and prospective parents.

Library – lgbtqpn.ca/library

Family Planning Courses lgbtqpn.ca/courses

Donor Insemination

Donor insemination can be done at home, in a fertility clinic or at a doctor's office. Insemination can be an easy method of achieving pregnancy for many people.

Known Donors

A known sperm donor is someone who is known to the parent or parents and who provides their sperm to conceive a child. In many cases, after the child is born, the donor and the child know each other. The donor may be part of the child's family, or may be known to the child as a supportive person, though they are not a primary parent. Other known donors may not know the child, or be known to the child at all.

Within LGBTQ communities, the relationship between a donor conceived child and a known donor is typically understood and appreciated, though the concept may not be familiar to people who are not part of LGBTQ parenting communities.

People typically inseminate with sperm from a known donor on their own, using a variety of do-it-yourself methods. Home insemination methods involve simply placing sperm from a donor near the opening of the cervix.

Due to restrictive federal regulations, doctors cannot perform insemination with sperm from a known donor without the sperm being frozen, and held in quarantine for six months before the insemination.

Unknown Donors

Sperm banks provide either sperm from donors who wish to remain anonymous forever, or from donors who have agreed to keep their contact information current with the sperm bank, and for that information to be released to any children conceived with their sperm when those children turn 18.

Donor sperm provided by sperm banks is frozen, and the chances of success are much higher with an intra-uterine insemination (IUI). For IUI, semen is prepared to separate the sperm from the semen. A catheter is gently inserted through the cervix into the uterus of the person who will carry the pregnancy, and the sperm is placed in the uterus to help it get closer to the egg.

IUI is frequently done in a fertility clinic, though some OBGYNs and family doctors are also able to perform inseminations. In Ontario, midwives are not allowed to perform inseminations. Some people have been able to learn how to do IUI for a partner or friend.

The cost of donor insemination can be free for a do-it-yourself home insemination with sperm from a known donor. In a fertility clinic, most of the costs associated with donor insemination are covered by OHIP. The cost of preparing the sperm for insemination, and the cost of the sperm itself are not covered. These costs can range between about \$400-500 per cycle for preparing the sperm for insemination, and from \$900-2,000 per cycle to pay for sperm from a sperm bank. Each cycle will cost between \$1,300 and \$2,500 for insemination with donor sperm.

Reproductive Options

For more detailed information on donor insemination, IVF, and surrogacy – consult our other info sheets, which are all available on our website.

LGBTQpn.ca/current for the full list.

Gestational Carriage and Surrogacy

Surrogacy is when a person carries a pregnancy for another family.

Arranging a surrogacy requires a lot of project management skills and time to coordinate. You must be prepared to take on a lot of that work. Some intended parents may choose to work with a fertility consultant. Carefully consider what their role may be and whether their approach is a good fit.

Gestational surrogacy involves one or more intended parents, at least one egg donor or services from an egg bank, as well as a gestational carrier or surrogate, and help from a fertility clinic. Fertility doctors will require that each person involved seeks counselling. A competent fertility counsellor's role is to provide information and guide each person in making informed decisions.

Traditional surrogacy involves one or more intended parents, a traditional surrogate or carrier, but may not involve a fertility clinic or an egg donor.

No matter what type of surrogacy you pursue, you should consult with lawyers who have experience in fertility law. Please consult our resources on surrogacies for more information.

Parenting in Community

Families grow and change over time. Parenting in community refers to a wide variety of patterns of parenting that are not all easily or neatly described. These parenting arrangements show some possibilities for parenthood, but are not mutually exclusive or a complete list.

Stepparenting and Parents as Partners

When a parent partners, that partner may become a parent or stepparent to their partner's child or they may not. Some families distinguish between stepparents and parents while other families do not.

Many people have both LGBTQ parents and straight parents and many people have more than two parents in separate households.

Co-Parenting

Co-parenting involves two or more adults who are not in a romantic relationship who parent together.

Co-parenting may evolve out of another parenting arrangement. The most frequent co-parenting arrangements involve parents who were formerly romantic partners.

Other families plan to co-parent before they have a child. Planned co-parenting family configurations can involve a single person and a couple, two single people, people who are partnered to other people who are not parents, two couples or a group of people parenting collectively or in community.

While many co-parenting arrangements can be legally recognized, many are not.

Mentoring

Being in a mentoring relationship to a younger person can be a type of parental relationship. It might be different from most parental relationships because it might not be permanent, but it might be fulfilling and rewarding for the mentor and the mentee. Mentoring takes many forms.

Parenting Options for LGBTQ People

Fostering

Foster parenting can be a form of parenting in community, since the parenting relationship is with the child being parented, as well as with that child's family of origin, and possibly a permanent family at a future point. Foster parents must parent a child in partnership with the child's social workers and other staff from their foster agency or Children's Aid Society. Foster parenting relationships can be permanent, but they are often temporary. Children who are being fostered may be moved to another foster home, they may be reunited with their family of origin, or they may be adopted by their foster family or another family.

Resources & Additional Contacts

LGBTQ Family Planning Courses

These facilitated closed learning groups are offered in partnership between the LGBTQ Parenting Network and The 519. In community, we explore practical, emotional, social and legal issues surrounding LGBTQ parenthood through presentations, group discussions and exercises, guest speakers and videos. For more information, visit lgbtqpn.ca/courses

Scenes from a Fertility Clinic

This video series shows several examples of self-advocacy in a fertility clinic. It features Angel, a trans woman who is freezing sperm and Vic and Samuel, two trans men who are hoping to become dads through insemination. Visit lgbtqpn.ca/scenes

Our Library

A central access point for reliable and up-to-date information and resources on lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBTQ) parenting. Visit lgbtqpn.ca/library

Directory

Our website has a directory which lists professionals who have expressed a commitment to providing competent and welcoming care to LGBTQ parents, gestational carriers prospective parents, and their children. While the emphasis is on listings within the greater Toronto area, it includes listings from across Ontario. Please visit lgbtqpn.ca/directory

Connect with us!

We send out a regular e-mail newsletter to keep you informed of training, research, resources, and community events supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer parenting. Please visit lgbtqpn.ca/enews to subscribe.

The LGBTQ Parenting Network supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer parenting through training, research, resource development and community organizing.

LGBTQ Parenting Network, Sherbourne Health Centre
333 Sherbourne Street, Toronto, Ontario M5A 2S5

www.LGBTQpn.ca

LGBTQpn@sherbourne.on.ca



This information is provided as a community resource by the LGBTQ Parenting Network, a program of Sherbourne Health Centre.

Every effort is made to ensure that this information is as current and accurate as possible, but we cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information. Readers should verify the information before acting on it.

We welcome reports of errors and omissions as well as suggestions.

For updates, visit: lgbtqpn.ca/current

Version 1.0 – Originally published December 2015