

SURROGACY

Some GBQ men have become parents through the use of a surrogate, a person who carries a child they do not intend to parent. There are two main types of surrogates. Traditional surrogates are people who have their own egg fertilized and carry the pregnancy. Gestational surrogates carry a pregnancy created through a fertilized egg from another person, an egg donor, and thus are not biologically related to the child they are carrying. There is usually a financial arrangement to compensate for the expenses of the surrogate during the pregnancy. Surrogates can be contacted individually or through agencies.*

*The Assisted Human Reproduction Act (2004) may have serious implications for surrogacy arrangements in Canada. The Act prohibits commercial surrogacy by making it an offence to pay, offer to pay or advertise to pay "consideration" to a person to be a surrogate.

PREGNANCY

Some gay/bi/queer/trans men consider the possibility of getting pregnant and using sperm either from a partner or a sperm donor. (See Known/Unknown Donor and Insemination brochures in our series.)

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

Daddies & Papas 2B/TransFathers 2B

The LGBT Parenting Network (Sherbourne Health Centre) and Queer Parenting Programmes at The 519 Church St. Community Centre sponsor two bi-annual 11-week courses for men considering parenthood. DP2B has been designed for GBQ men. TF2B has been designed recognizing the unique challenges for trans men of all sexual orientations. These courses provide detailed information about the options available to GBQT men considering parenthood, as well as an opportunity to connect with others who are deciding if and how to bring children into their lives.

Daddy, Papa & Me

Queer Parenting Programmes at The 519 Church St. Community Centre runs a monthly queer-positive family resource program for fathers and their children (birth to age 6). Come meet other families in this kids' play space, which has toys, activities, music, snacks, children's and parenting books and other resources. We also keep in touch through an e-mail list. Second Saturday of every month from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

RESOURCES

LGBT Parenting Network, Sherbourne Health Centre
416-324 4100, ext. 5219 www.sherbourne.on.ca

Queer Parenting Programmes
The 519 Church St. Community Centre
416-392-6878, ext. 109 www.the519.org

Family Service Association of Toronto
www.fsatoronto.com (LGBT Parents)

Gay Fathers of Toronto
416-925-9872 x 2124 www.gayfathers-toronto.com

TransParentcy www.transparentcy.org

GQTGParenthood - Trans & GenderQueer Parenting
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/GQTGParenthood/>

Children's Aid Society of Toronto
416-924-4646 www.torontocas.ca

Adoption Council of Ontario 416-482-0021 www.adoption.on.ca

Ministry of Children and Youth Services - International Adoption Agencies List
<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/CS/en/programs/Adoption/Publications/IAAList.htm>

T.O. Parent: Ontario LGBT Parent Matchmaker
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/to-parent/>

Canadian Surrogacy Options
519-767-1171 www.canadiansurrogacyoptions.com

Fathertree (surrogacy support service for gay men) 416-720-2600

Toronto Fertility Clinics

CREATE 416-323-7727 www.createivf.com

LIFEQUEST 416-506-0804; 1-866-543-3046
<http://lifequestivf.com>

Toronto West Fertility Associates
416-231-4100 www.torontofertility.com

Savage, D. (2000) *The Kid: (What Happened After My Boyfriend and I Decided to Go Get Pregnant) An Adoption Story.* Dutton/Plume: N.Y.

Strah, D. (2003) *Gay Dads: A Celebration of Fatherhood.* Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam: N.Y.

McGarry, K. (2003) *Fatherhood for Gay Men: An Emotional and Practical Guide to Becoming a Gay Dad.* Harrington Park Press: N.Y.

Daddy & Papa, a film by Johnny Symons (2002) New Day Films. 57 min. U.S.A.

Resources provided for information only. We cannot recommend or endorse specific organizations, services or websites.

Queer Parenting Info Brochure Series developed collaboratively by FSA Toronto, Sherbourne Health Centre, The 519 Church St. Community Centre and community members.

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Parenting Options for Gay/Bi/Queer Men

Are you thinking about having kids?

Have you assumed that being gay/bi/queer means you can't parent?

It's not true. Growing numbers of openly gay/bi/queer men are becoming parents.



design: www.orangehabitats.com

Artist: Sadie



Info on Parenting Options for Gay/Bi/Queer (GBQ) Men

In the past, heterosexual families were viewed as the only acceptable place within which to raise children. Many gay and bisexual men had children within heterosexual relationships but were forced to remain closeted for fear of losing their children. More recently, due to human rights struggles waged over many years by lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities, it has become more possible for cisgender* and transgender gay and bisexual men to become parents while being open about their identities.

GBQ men considering parenthood reflect the reality that many men are actively interested in raising children. It is very important to some men to experience fatherhood and to have loving relationships in a family that includes children. Some choose single parenthood, some parent in same-sex couples and some arrange joint parenting with others with whom they, or a partner, can biologically create children.

GBQ men who parent face many commonly-held, but inaccurate, stereotypes. These include the assumption that women are essential to the nurturing of children, that "gay men" are likely to sexually abuse children, and that "gay men" are too busy thinking about or having sex to properly care for children. Many leading child welfare, psychological and children's health organizations have issued policy statements refuting these ideas and declaring that a parent's sexual orientation is irrelevant to his or her ability to raise a child.

In 2003 the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) issued a statement that reads, in part: "According to the CPA, the psychosocial research into lesbian and gay parenting indicates that there are essentially no differences in the psychosocial development, gender identity or sexual orientation between the children of gay or lesbian parents and the children of heterosexual parents."

Recent research also points to some interesting and positive possibilities for children who grow up in

***Cisgender** refers to a non-transgender person, i.e. someone whose perceived biological sex matches the way they were raised and their internal gender identity.

lesbian/gay/bisexual-led families (see, for example, Stacey & Biblarz (2002) (How) Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter? American Sociological Review 66.)

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people are creating families in diverse and creative ways. The options for GBQ men who are considering parenthood include:

ADOPTION

Adoption refers to the process of becoming a legal parent or guardian of a child to whom one is not biologically related. It is now legal in Ontario for two people in a same-sex relationship to jointly adopt. There is currently a lot of educational work being done within Children's Aid Societies, and within private adoption agencies, to increase awareness and support for adoption by LGBT people. However, there is still much work to be done, and LGBT people attempting adoption continue to report that they face barriers.

Public Adoption through the Children's Aid Society

In Ontario, GBQ men, as individuals or as couples, are able to adopt children who are in the custody of the Children's Aid Society (CAS) and who no longer have access to their biological parents. There are no costs involved with a public adoption. The CAS requires that you attend the "Adoption Decision Program" and a social worker must do a home study as part of the process. While all individuals or couples who are eligible to adopt through the CAS are in theory equal, the needs of the child are determined by social workers representing the child, with input from others involved with the child, including the foster family.

Private Adoption

Private adoption usually takes place through doctors, adoption agencies or individual licencees within Canada, without the involvement of the Children's Aid Society. There is usually a fee involved and it can be expensive. A child's birth parents can influence decisions about where a child is placed and these decisions can be affected by values and beliefs concerning LGBT people as parents.

International Adoption

Most same-sex international adoptions are done by people who, for the purposes of adoption, are single and not open about their sexual orientation. The regulations that guide international adoptions are unique to each country. Some countries will no longer allow single people to adopt as they assume that some of these individuals are "gay or lesbian".

In order to qualify to adopt internationally, you have to have a home study done by a social worker who assesses your suitability to adopt. If you are planning on being open about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity, a great deal depends on the individual social worker's knowledge levels and professionalism. As you have to pay for this assessment, you can choose a social worker with whom you are comfortable and who is familiar with LGBT-led families. In Ontario, you must work with an agency licensed to facilitate international adoptions. International adoption is also an expensive process. Check online with the Ontario government or with the Adoption Council of Ontario to find out which agencies focus on adoption from particular countries.

JOINT PARENTING WITH OTHERS

Many GBQ men create families with others with whom they, or a partner, can biologically create children or take on parenting roles with other parents and their children. Many queer women and men have chosen to have and raise children together, outside of an intimate partnership, creating new and innovative kinds of families. These families can include many configurations, such as: multiple caregivers, two single individuals who parent together, two couples or a couple and an individual.

If you are considering a joint parenting arrangement, it is helpful to spend a lot of time getting to know the people you intend to parent with, exploring your (and their) parenting values, discussing important issues and drawing up a joint parenting contract. While co-parenting contracts are not legally binding, drawing up Co-parenting, like all parenting, requires flexibility, communication, trust and a willingness to deal with the unexpected. (See brochure on Co-Parenting.)