

1 PARENTING OPTIONS

There have always been LGBTQ people who are parents. Many LGBTQ people become parents in the context of heterosexual relationships, and many are stepparents, having entered families that already include children. In recent years, as a result of increased social/legal recognition and access to reproductive technologies, a broader range of parenting options has opened up for LGBTQ people.

LGBTQ Family Structures

Like other families, LGBTQ families are structured in many ways. Some people parent alone, many parent in couples, and sometimes three or more people come together to co-parent outside of romantic, creating families larger than the traditional two-parent unit. Some families include known sperm/egg donors or surrogates in their families, with varying amounts of involvement. The new BC Family Law Act recognizes the intention to parent over genetic connection as the foundation of parenthood.

ROUTES TO PARENTHOOD

Planning

For LGBTQ people the road to parenthood typically involves a thoughtful process. Decisions may differ depending on sexual orientation, gender identity, relationship status, family configuration (single, partnered, co-parenting), access to donors, racial and cultural considerations, reproductive health, and financial resources.

Pregnancy

Many people choose pregnancy for themselves, a partner or co-parent, or as part of a surrogacy arrangement. In BC it is a good idea when making surrogacy arrangements to complete a written agreement before conception.

Donor Insemination (DI): Donor insemination is a procedure involving the introduction of semen into the vaginal canal, cervix or uterus around the time of ovulation. It is possible to do donor insemination at home with a known sperm donor, or to be inseminated at a doctor's office or fertility clinic with semen from a sperm bank, either Anonymous or I.D. Release. Intrauterine insemination (IUI) should only be done by a skilled practitioner in a clinical setting.

In Vitro Fertilization (IVF): IVF is a procedure by which an embryo is created outside the body and then inserted into the uterus of the

person carrying the pregnancy. Some couples choose to do IVF, implanting the fertilized egg from one partner into the uterus of the other. IVF is used in gestational surrogacy, and is also used by those having difficulty conceiving.

Gamete Freezing: For some people it makes sense to freeze gametes (sperm, eggs, embryos) in order to safeguard options to have children later. For example, a trans person about to begin a gender transition might consider this option.

Surrogacy: A surrogate is someone who carries a child they do not intend to parent. There are two kinds of surrogacy: traditional (*the same person provides the egg and carries the child*), and gestational (*one person donates the egg, another carries the baby*).

Surrogacy is legal in Canada, although, under the Assisted Human Reproduction Act, a surrogate can only be reimbursed for expenses and cannot be paid to carry a child.

Adoption (Public, Private, International, Kin)

Adoption is the permanent legal transfer of parental rights from one person or couple to another person or couple. Anyone can apply to adopt a child in British Columbia, regardless of their sexual orientation, or whether they are in a relationship or not.

There are four types of adoption: Private, Public, International, and Relative or Kin Adoption. International adoption is, for the most part, unavailable to openly LGBTQ people.

Fostering

When a child comes into care they are placed in a foster home while efforts are made to either return them to their birth family or find a permanent adoptive home. Foster parents are involved in the adoption planning for a child and may be given the opportunity to put forward an adoption plan themselves, if appropriate.