

TITLE

Your Guide to Becoming a Surrogate

INTRO

HEAD

Introduction

BODY

Thank you for downloading our guide to becoming a surrogate. You're considering, or already beginning, a journey that may initially seem confusing, but is ultimately deeply fulfilling and joyful.

The purpose of this guide is to give you a better understanding of how women go about becoming surrogates. It's our goal to help clear up the mystery around the process and minimize as much confusion and stress as possible.

The pathway to becoming a surrogate has many important steps, but with the right guide, these steps are simple to take and well worth the end result.

SUB

The Top 10 Myths About Becoming a Surrogate

BODY

As you begin the process, you'll likely hear a few myths from friends or on various discussion boards. It's important that you be aware of these myths and the truth behind them to avoid delaying or derailing your success.

The first myth is that anyone can be a surrogate. In reality, surrogates face extensive medical, psychological and lifestyle screenings to ensure that only the most healthy, stable, and reliable women can be considered for surrogacy. Guidelines are set in place to not only protect the child and the intended parents, but you, as well. Each agency has certain guidelines and criteria in place. However most reputable agencies follow the guidelines set in place by clinics as well as the Assisted Society for Reproductive Medicine. Agencies are different in compensation, communication and how processes are handled.

The second myth is that all parties involved are treated equally. Each party has its own role and will perform those roles as such. Once you have selected your intended parents, signed all necessary contracts and paperwork, and the embryo has been transferred, your needs and wants are (within reason) paramount. It is, however, important to cooperate with your intended parents and agency to make sure that you AND your intended parents are happy and comfortable throughout the pregnancy and delivery.

The third myth is that you don't need an attorney for contracts, and that you and the intended parents can create your own contracts or use clinic consent forms. It is absolutely crucial that you and the intended parents work with your own individual attorneys (who are versed in reproductive law) to create legally binding documents that protect you and the intended parents parental rights.

The fourth myth is that you have no say as to the intended parents if you choose to work with an agency. This will depend on the agency you select, but most agencies will allow you to select the

intended parents you would like to assist. If you find an agency that does not, it's important to assess whether or not this is the right agency for you.

The fifth myth is that you, as the surrogate, have any kind of legal right to keep the baby or even that you'll have the desire to keep the baby. Likely made popular by a few outrageous news stories and TV movies, this idea is very far from the truth. Not only will you have no legal grounds on which to challenge the parentage order, but it's extremely unlikely that you will want to. Selecting and working with the intended parents gives you a deep appreciation for their desire for a child and most surrogates regard the moment that the intended parents first meet their child as utterly joyful.

The sixth myth is that you can't be a surrogate if your "tubes are tied" (tubal ligation). This is completely false. Having your "tubes tied" is unimportant to the process since you will undergo in-vitro fertilization and the embryo will be implanted into your uterus.

The seventh myth is that you can't be a surrogate if you have had a cesarean (C-section) procedure. Provided you have had no more than two C-sections, you can still apply to become a surrogate.

The eighth myth is that if you navigate the process independently (without a surrogacy agency), you will save the intended parents a lot of money. Going through the process independently only saves the intended parents the agency fee cost, while leaving both parties open to the legal and financial complications of the process that an expert could help you avoid.

The ninth myth—while not as prevalent, but still worth mentioning—is that the surrogate must have sexual intercourse with the intended fathers. This is, of course, in no way true. In a gestational surrogacy case, you will go through an in-vitro fertilization (IVF) procedure in a medical clinic. The embryo (the egg of the intended mother or a donor egg and the sperm of the intended father or donor sperm) is fertilized in a lab and then transferred into your uterus.

And the final popular myth is all agencies are alike. Each agency has certain guidelines and criteria in place, and most reputable agencies follow the guidelines set in place by clinics as well as the Assisted Society for Reproductive Medicine. However, agencies can differ greatly in terms of compensation, communication and support, and how the various processes are handled. It's important to work with an agency with which you are comfortable, as well as one that has positive testimonies from surrogates and previous intended parents.

Surrogacy Terms/Acronyms:

Below are terms related to gestational surrogacy and are important for you to know. You'll see that several of these words are used interchangeably:

- (GC) Gestational Carrier ~ (GS) Gestational Surrogate ~ Surrogate ~ Surro ~ (SM) Surrogate Mother ~ Gestational Substitute Mother
- (IP) Intended Parent ~ (PP) Prospective Parent ~ (FP) Future Parent ~ Commissioning Couple ~ Recipient ~ (IM) Intended Mother ~ (IF) Intended Father
- (IVF) In-Vitro Fertilization
- (ED) Egg Donor ~ Oocyte (egg)

SECTION 1

HEAD

Preparing to Become a Surrogate

BODY

Generally speaking, there are two different types of surrogacy: traditional, wherein your eggs are used and you carry the baby; or gestational, where you carry the baby but you have no genetic link to it. It's important to begin the process by deciding how comfortable you are with these types of surrogacy and whether you would prefer one or the other.

Additionally, when you're considering becoming a surrogate, there are a few things that you should consider. As a guideline, we've included the following requirements provided by the Assisted Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM). These are the guidelines that are followed by clinics, psychologists and agencies.

“The ideal [surrogate] is a healthy woman between the ages of 21 and 45 who has had a successful term pregnancy and has a supportive family environment to help her cope with the added stress of pregnancy. The carrier should have no more than five previous vaginal deliveries or two previous cesarean deliveries. Prior to becoming pregnant, [she] should talk about the risks of pregnancy with her healthcare provider.”

https://www.asrm.org/FACTSHEET_Gestational_Carrier_Surrogate

SECTION 2

HEAD

Independent vs Agency Matching

SUBHEAD

Independent Matching

If you are considering becoming a surrogate for a close friend or relative, this can be a wonderful gift to give them. But while this can further cement close relationships, it also has the potential to complicate them.

Even your closest friend or relative should begin by asking you somewhat personal questions about your medical and psychological history, as well as questions about your lifestyle and daily habits. Bear in mind, too, that it's likely that you and your close friend/relative will be deeply connected during and after the pregnancy, and it can be challenging to draw boundaries that are comfortable for both parties.

These interpersonal challenges, along with legal ramifications and other issues, can be hard to navigate when your intended parent is someone close to you. You and your intended parent(s) may find that having an objective third party—a professional surrogacy agency—who is knowledgeable about the process will help.

You may, also, independently seek to find intended parents to work with by posting ads or reaching out to your network. While this is certainly a valid means of finding intended parents, you may find

it challenging to navigate the legal, financial, medical, and even emotional challenges of surrogacy without the help of an expert.

SUBHEAD

Agency Matching

Many surrogates will choose to work with an agency to help with their surrogacy journey. In this case, there are different issues you must consider.

An agency will also ask you very personal questions about your medical and psychological history, but they may also have mandated criteria that may affect your ability to become a surrogate. For example, some agencies have very strict age guidelines and some require that you have already carried and delivered a healthy baby.

You'll want to check with each surrogacy agency you're interested in working with to see what their criteria are.

You will also be required to provide background information to help intended parents make a selection. This may be limited to baby pictures and information about you, or may include current photos of you and your family if you're opting for a more open donation.

A professional surrogacy agency works to match a surrogate with intended parents, allowing the intended parents to make the final selection. The professional agency also facilitates meetings between you and the intended parents, as well as facilitates logistics with the fertility clinic.

SECTION 3

HEAD

Selecting an Agency

BODY

Once you have decided which kind of surrogate you would like to be, you'll need to begin the process of selecting an agency to work with.

You are not necessarily bound to select a surrogacy agency that is local to you, so be sure to consider a wide reach of agencies.

First, you'll want to be sure to select an agency that provides full-service support and guidance throughout the whole process—from initially signing up to be a surrogate well-through your post-partum experience. The process can be confusing and stressful, so it's crucial that you have an experienced agency that you can rely on.

You also need to make sure you're working with an agency that has ample experience with the kind of surrogacy you'd like to provide, as well as the kind of on-going relationship you'd like to have with the intended parents. This, too, can be challenging to navigate—even in the case of opting for no ongoing relationship—and you'll want an agency that is experienced with the transition.

It's important, too, that the agency you work with is just as selective about accepting intended parents as it is about accepting surrogates.

The financial compensation for your surrogacy will vary from agency to agency, and may come with different stipulations for each, so it's important to do thorough research about each one you are interested in working with.

Unless you are working with intended parents that you already know, the best course is for the professional surrogacy agency to discuss compensation and other elements of the contract with the you instead of you discussing it directly with the intended parents; this helps to eliminate uncomfortable moments between you.

Once the terms have been agreed upon, the professional surrogacy agency can arrange for lawyers to draft the contract, review it, and facilitate any negotiations between you/your legal representation and that of the intended parents. It's generally not necessary to retain your own legal representation, but you will often have that option if you'd prefer.

It may be tempting for some potential surrogates to attempt a more "Diy" navigation of the process. However, working with an agency not only can prevent legal and financial complications, but also can help prevent you, as a surrogate, from getting scammed.

Working with an agency can have many benefits and very few, if any at all, downsides. You will be treated with courtesy and respect, but you'll also be provided with important information you may not be able to get or gather from the internet. You will also receive guidance, support, counseling, and answers to your questions throughout the process, as well as legal assistance as necessary.

The surrogacy process is incredibly rewarding, but is not without its challenges; a reputable agency will ensure that you understand these challenges before you begin.

Finally, it's crucial that you choose a surrogacy agency with which you feel comfortable. Being a surrogate is a unique emotional experience that can quickly change from being stressful to joyful and right back again. It will be important that you feel both adequately guided and supported before, during, and after the pregnancy.

SECTION 4

HEAD

Financial Considerations

BODY

Whether or not you choose to seek compensation for your gift is something you should think carefully about.

When a surrogate receives no compensation for carrying a child, it is known as "altruistic surrogacy". This is the case in many or most surrogacy situations involving family members or close friends.

The term "commercial surrogacy" indicates that compensation is involved, and this is often the case in both traditional and gestational arrangements among strangers.

While financial compensation may be a part of the surrogacy journey, it should not be the primary motivation. The best surrogates are those who are in stable, loving, financially solvent, and supportive relationships, and are motivated by love and a desire to help others.

SECTION 5

HEAD

Legal and Insurance Considerations

BODY

It is important for both you and the intended parents to work with legal representation that is familiar with the surrogacy process, and a professional surrogacy agency will be able to provide you with recommendations.

The state in which the baby is born will determine the legal issues regarding the surrogacy. The agency will provide the intended parents (and you, if applicable) with attorney recommendations in that state since it is very important to have an attorney that is well versed with that state's specific reproductive laws.

As part of the contract process, the attorneys and your surrogacy agency will assist you and advise you about escrow and financial matters and arrange for the escrow to be handled.

Finally, insurance can be a complicated matter when it comes to both intended parents and surrogates, so a professional surrogacy agency will guide you through the issues, ensuring that the you are adequately insured and that the intended parents are aware of any insurance charges or responsibilities.

SECTION 6

HEAD

Medical and Psychological Screening

BODY

You can expect to undergo both a pre-screening and a screening process prior to being selected for surrogacy. As you can understand, making sure that surrogates are fully prepared for the process is of tantamount importance, and these official screening processes help intended parents feel reassured as they begin the journey.

At most surrogacy agencies, pre-screening consists of criminal background checks for you and your partner. The agency will also review all your pregnancy and birth records for each of your children, as well as the results of your most current pap smear. Most agencies will also require a clearance letter from your previous obstetrician. It's also very likely that you will need to provide insurance verification, and then undergo a psychological evaluation and a psychological social evaluation (often referred to as a "home visit").

For the psychological evaluation, you will likely complete a personality assessment test. This will be utilized to inform the Mental Health Professional (MHP) regarding your suitability. Your spouse/partner (if applicable) will also likely need to attend this session.

Once you and a set of intended parents have decided you would like to work with one another, you will be introduced to the clinic. The clinic will require you complete an initial medical history intake form, which will be reviewed and approved by the clinic. Once it is approved, you will be notified and can schedule your initial visit.

During your appointment with the clinic, they will review your medical history along and you will complete a physical examination to determine if you are medically qualified. A normal first visit appointment will consist of a transvaginal ultrasound, uterine evaluation and blood work. If possible, your [male] partner will need to complete his blood test at this time, too. If not, an appointment will be scheduled for him. All screening requirements must be completed prior to cycle start.

In addition to the psychological evaluation you complete during the pre-screening process, you will be required to complete further psychological evaluations (as required by the clinic) with your intended parents as part of a group cycle.

SECTION 7

HEAD

Embryo Transfer

BODY

Once you have been selected as a surrogate, your surrogacy agency will facilitate the necessary medical appointments for the preparation for and actual embryo transfer. You should also plan to return to the clinic 12-14 days after the transfer for a pregnancy blood test.

It will be up to you to keep the intended parents (and your agency) informed of doctor's appointments and times, and to provide them with updates if the intended parents are unable to attend any of them.

Many surrogates are concerned about the interactions with intended parents during the course of the pregnancy. In truth, there is no right or wrong way to interact with the intended parents and the frequency with which you see or communicate with them should be a mutual compromise between you. It's also, of course, important to discuss this well before the embryo transfer, but also to continue the discussion during the pregnancy.

Your surrogacy agency will be able to give you advice about how best and how often to interact with the intended parents and help ensure that the process is comfortable for both parties throughout the pregnancy.

Your agency will also help you to plan for your ideal experience during the birth, and immediately after.

SECTION 5

HEAD

Your Next Steps

BODY

Now that you have a general understanding of the process of becoming a surrogate, you're ready to begin exploring your options.

A professional surrogacy agency will guide you through the intricacies and complexities of the process, ensuring that the journey toward helping intended parents bring a child home is a straightforward and happy one.

For your free consultation with Family Inceptions International, please call 844-404-BABY or visit our website at www.FamilyInceptions.com.

BIO SECTION

HEAD

About Us

BODY

Family Inceptions International is an egg donation and surrogacy agency based in Atlanta that assists surrogates and egg donors with their desires to bestow blessings and change lives, and allows intended parents to fulfill their dreams of creating or adding to their families.

Our founder, Eloise Drane, has been helping people become parents via egg donation and surrogacy since 2006. Since then, she and Family Inceptions International have helped upwards of 60 intended parents add a child to their families.

Our company is driven by a mission of inclusivity, support, and community. Our success comes from our dedication to forging relationships with our donors, surrogates, and intended parents alike.

We feel that as we help others create new lives, we add to our own extended family.

TESTIMONIALS

A few words from a few of our surrogates:

“My biggest fear was feeling like I did not have autonomy or control over decisions being made in the process. I ended up having a ton of support and felt that all of my concerns were heard, respected, and worked through.”—Elizabeth G.

“...Eloise took the time to make sure we were placed with the perfect couple for us and everything with the relationship was perfect... the company is professional, patient, caring, knowledgeable and makes you feel at ease. I am so honored to have been a surrogate through this amazing agency. If I ever do another surrogacy I'll never use another agency... I love you all as if you were family and I'm so blessed to have found you.” —Casey E.

