



## How Same Gender Headed Families are Formed

Same gender headed families are created in a myriad of ways. Although not an exhaustive list, following are the most common ways that LGBT families are formed.

- **CHILDREN FROM PREVIOUS STRAIGHT RELATIONSHIPS:** In some cases, people currently in homosexual relationships were formally in a heterosexual relationship. The new parent or stepparent may now be a full parent to the child, or may not, and the child may or may not have connections to their birth mother or father. Children of transgender parents might also have been conceived before a transgender parent transitioned gender. A majority of all LGBT families are formed through previous heterosexual relationships.
- **ADOPTION:** Many LGBT families are created through adoption. Adoptions can be (1) public foster adoptions (through the county) (2) private domestic adoptions or (3) international adoptions. The experiences of the families who go through these various adoption processes vary. It is important to note that trans-racial adoptions are common in the LGBT community (adoptions in which a parent or parents are a different race from their adopted child(ren)). In fact, multiple races and/or multiracial individuals can sometimes comprise a single family. Thus, try not to make assumptions about the race of either a child or parent.
- **SPERM DONOR INSEMINATION.** Sperm banks provide a list of donors for couples to choose from. Some donors are “known donors” and a child can contact him when he or she is 18 years old. Others are “anonymous donors” and the donor’s identity is not accessible to the child. Another type of “known donor” is when lesbians ask people they know to become donors and then the parties work out the relationship (both personal and legal) between the donor and the child. In some cases, there is an “uncle” type relationship, and sometimes the donor is called dad. Non-birth parents often legally adopt a child born by their partner.

How the insemination is done (and why someone may choose that method) varies, including:

- ◇ Having sex with a man, either someone they know or a stranger, with the intent to get pregnant.
  - ◇ Alternative insemination, where the sperm is either inserted into the vagina, or directly into the uterus (called intrauterine insemination) either at home or at a clinic.
  - ◇ In-vitro fertilization (IVF), where a fertilized embryo is implanted in the woman’s uterus.
- **FOSTER CARE.** Children are sometimes placed in the temporary care of a foster family as the result of problems or challenges within the birth family, or while critical elements of an adoption are being completed. These children are a part of the public child welfare system and a social worker from Human Services Agency will be involved in their case. Parents and caregivers have to be licensed by the county to be foster parents. Special services are often available to help meet the needs of children in foster care.
  - **KINSHIP CARE.** Children may live with family other than their parents in a “kinship care”

situation, and may or may not be a part of the public foster care system.

- **CO-PARENTING.** Here, either a man and a woman, or two couples, agree to parent together. The child is often genetically related to one of the moms and the dad, but a co-parenting arrangement could be developed via adoption as well.
- **SURROGACY.** Some gay men find a woman who can carry a child for them. The woman is generally identified and paid to carry the child with the help of an agency. Commonly, the child is the biologic product of an egg either of the surrogate mother or another woman and the sperm of one of the fathers.
- **DONOR EGG.** Some women have some of their eggs surgically removed, inseminated outside of their body, and have the resulting embryo(s) transferred to their partner. Here, the birth mother is not the genetic mother, so questions about medical history would more appropriately be directed to the genetic mother. If a lesbian couple uses a donor egg not belonging to either partner, the donor may not be referred to as a “mother” at all, but as a “donor.”