



Exploring all pathways to parenthood

LGBTQIA+ family building



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What is the current state of LGBTQIA+ family building?

Starting and raising a family can have ups and downs—but for LGBTQIA+ couples and individuals, the challenges may be even greater. The family-building options in the healthcare system today often overlook or diminish LGBTQIA+ people’s needs. If you identify as part of this community, you may face expensive treatments, discriminatory laws and regulations, and providers who may be prejudiced, uneducated, or unwilling to help. But even with these obstacles, more LGBTQIA+ people are fulfilling their dreams of growing their families than ever before. Data shows that [45% to 52%](#) of queer-identifying people between the ages of 18 to 25 are planning to have or add kids to their families.

So what are the current paths to parenthood for you? What are some of the challenges you might face? Here’s a breakdown of how LGBTQIA+ people often start their families.

ADOPTION

Adoption is when you’re legally recognized as a child’s parent, and there are many paths you can take to get there. You can work with an adoption agency, hire an adoption lawyer, or go through the foster care system. Adoption rules can vary quite a bit from state to state and country to country, so you’ll need to learn the rules of where you’re adopting from. While same-sex adoption is legal in all states, there are [laws](#) in certain states that allow adoption agencies to refuse to work with LGBTQIA+ people (i.e. Alabama, Arizona, Kansas, Michigan, Mississippi, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia). And international adoption from the U.S. can be difficult—only Colombia, Brazil, and the Philippines allow LGBTQIA+-identifying Americans to adopt.

SURROGACY

Gestational surrogacy is when embryos are created with eggs and sperm from the intended parents (or from donors), then implanted into the uterus of a gestational carrier. There’s also “traditional surrogacy,” where the person who provides the egg also carries the baby, though that’s much less common today. While surrogacy is a good way for LGBTQIA+ individuals to have biological children, it can be expensive. If you use an agency to match you with a gestational carrier, costs can climb over \$100,000. Surrogacy laws also vary by state and country, so you’ll need to enlist a lawyer or agency to help you with the surrogacy contract and legal implications. Gestational surrogacy contracts are either [prohibited by law](#) or restricted to heterosexual married couples in Arizona, Indiana, Louisiana, and Michigan. Surrogacy is also [illegal](#) in several countries around the world, such as France, Germany, and Portugal.



INTRAUTERINE INSEMINATION (IUI)

IUI treatment is often a first step in fertility treatments for many same-sex couples, single women or individuals with a uterus, or people using donor sperm. The procedure involves placing sperm directly into the uterus as close as possible to the time of ovulation. Medications are often used in an IUI cycle to stimulate ovulation, which makes the chances of having multiples higher. Success rates can be 10-20% per cycle and costs vary from roughly \$300-\$1,000 per cycle. But fertility clinics for IUI can be hard to find, especially clinics that are both high-quality and LGBTQIA+-friendly. Another hurdle in IUI can be navigating insurance coverage. Most insurance companies still require a formal infertility diagnosis to provide coverage, which discriminates against same-sex couples and individuals. Many insurance companies recognize this limitation and are beginning to introduce LGBTQIA+-friendly policies in their plans. Internationally, LGBTQIA+ people are excluded from assisted reproductive treatment in [many countries](#) around the world.

IN VITRO FERTILIZATION (IVF)

The process of IVF involves fertilizing an egg outside the body, then implanting it into the birthing parent's (or gestational carrier's) uterus. IVF is very invasive but has a higher success rate than other types of fertility treatments. The average IVF cycle can range from [\\$12,000 to \\$17,000](#). Same-sex couples and single parents often turn to IVF to contribute genetic material to the baby. A couple can either contribute sperm to fertilize a donor egg, or they can choose to use donor sperm instead. Donor embryos are also an option. Fertility treatments like IVF can be both physically draining and expensive. Similar to IUI, LGBTQIA+ people face discrimination internationally with IVF and many patients have to pay out-of-pocket because insurance companies require a formal infertility diagnosis before covering treatments.

SPERM OR EGG FREEZING

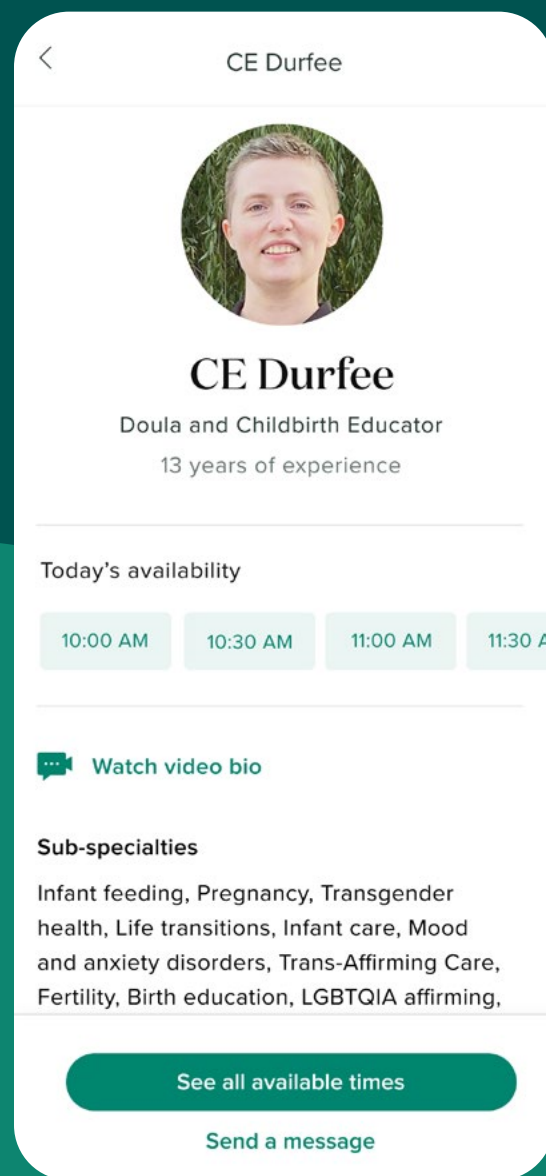
For transgender people, there are surgical transitions that can take away access to someone's own eggs, sperm, or uterus. There are also some medical transitions that can negatively affect the quality or viability of eggs or sperm. But there are options to preserve fertility through sperm and egg freezing before transitioning. The current options are:

- **Egg freezing, or oocyte cryopreservation** (also called egg banking and egg cryopreservation): This is a process in which a person's eggs are extracted from the ovary, frozen, and stored.
- **Sperm freezing, or cryopreservation**: This is a procedure that takes place to stabilize sperm in subzero temperatures. If the frozen sperm is mature sperm (ejaculated rather than testicular), it can remain viable for years.
- **Ovarian tissue cryopreservation**: This form of preservation can remove the egg-producing portion of the ovary, called the ovarian cortex, before a patient's medical transition, freeze it, store it, and transplant it later.

To learn more about each path to parenthood, join Maven for free at mavenclinic.com/join/allpaths to speak to a dedicated Care Advocate who can help guide you on your journey today.



How to advocate for yourself with tips from Maven Doula CE Durfee



The journey to parenthood can be mentally and physically tough on anyone. But for LGBTQIA+ individuals and couples, there's also the added stress of finding providers and services that are inclusive, respectful, and understanding.

Maven Doula & Childbirth Educator CE Durfee, (he/they) has five tips for advocating for yourself to ensure your family-building journey is fulfilling and supportive.

01 Seek out queer, trans, and nonbinary providers

You deserve to feel seen. You may feel safer and more understood if you're [treated](#) by someone who has a similar lived experience. Do your research by looking through providers' websites, social media, and advertising materials. The providers should mention working with LGBTQIA+ couples, have representation in their photos, and have designated resources to support you. Your Care Advocate can work to match you with providers who share your race, gender identity, sexuality, and preferred language.

02 Take gender-affirming classes

A safe and affirming environment is crucial for fostering better outcomes for queer, transgender, nonbinary, and genderqueer parents-to-be. In classes that prioritize your comfort and safety, you'll learn helpful tips so you can go into the process of building your family with a solid foundation of knowledge. Check out Maven's LGBTQIA+ birthing class on-demand in the [Maven Clinic app](#).

03 Include your name and pronouns when introducing yourself and in documentation

Sharing your preferred pronouns removes guessing or assuming to ensure safer, more comfortable spaces for you in every room. Using a pronoun pin could also be helpful for you, your family, and your providers.

04 Find a doula

A [doula](#) is a person who provides emotional and physical support to you during reproductive health experiences. Doulas can help advocate for you and protect against misgendering during your appointments and in the birthing space.

05 Join online communities

In addition to talking to other LGBTQIA+ people you know who have gone through similar paths to parenthood, online communities and social media can be a great resource for finding accessible and inclusive support.

Have questions about self-advocacy, birthing, or finding gender-affirming support? With Maven, you can video chat with inclusive, gender-affirming providers anytime, anywhere, for free. [Join today](#) to meet with your Care Advocate and build your care team.

Tips for managing your mental health through all pathways to parenthood

The family-building journey can be an emotional rollercoaster for anyone. And for LGBTQIA+ parents-to-be, prioritizing your mental health is critical. Members of the LGBTQIA+ community are [twice](#) as likely as heterosexual people to experience a mental health disorder in their lifetime. That's why it's so important to equip yourself with the tools you need to support your mental health during the process. We spoke to Maven Mental Health Specialist Alexa Sampson (she/her) about how LGBTQIA+ people can take charge of their mental well-being.

Maven can connect you with Mental Health Providers to support you along your journey. Visit mavenclinic.com/join/allpaths to video chat or privately message with one today.



[MAVENCLINIC.COM/JOIN/ALLPATHS](https://mavenclinic.com/join/allpaths)

- Q.** How can LGBTQIA+ individuals navigate discrimination and stigma during the family-building process?
- A.** **Alexa Sampson:** Know that you have the opportunity to advocate for your needs—and that you can find the support you need. You have the right to receive services from a provider that you trust. Joining a support group for prospective LGBTQIA+ parents and attending individual and/or couples therapy can help sort out any complicated emotions.
- Q.** What resources are available for LGBTQIA+ individuals looking to start or expand their families, and how can they access them?
- A.** **AS:** Maven is a great resource for families, with access to mission-driven providers committed to the well-being of individuals and families. Members can enroll in individual or couples therapy to help clarify goals, explore options, and address any worries about the process.
- Q.** What are some actionable ways to practice self-care through the stress, anxiety, and depression of this time?
- A.** **AS:** Self-care is essential, especially in periods of stress. Lean into activities that you enjoy such as taking a walk, engaging in a mindfulness or meditation practice, exercising, and spending time with friends and family.
- Q.** How can LGBTQIA+ people ask for support from the people in their lives or create a community?
- A.** **AS:** Although it is hard to ask for help, asking trusted friends and family for what you need can go a long way. Oftentimes, your community may be unaware of what support their loved ones are needing or wanting. If you communicate your struggles and the support you're seeking, they can care for you more easily.



How Maven supports all pathways to parenthood— at no cost to you

Maven is committed to making all paths to parenthood accessible for members. Maven offers guidance and emotional support through:

- Dedicated Care Advocates who can provide referrals to top-rated, LGBTQIA+-friendly adoption agencies, fertility clinics, and in-person providers in your area
- 24/7 access to 35+ provider types, including fertility specialists, adoption coaches, surrogacy coaches, reproductive endocrinologists, and mental health specialists at no cost to you
- Expert-reviewed health articles and on-demand provider-led classes that provide clarity on tough topics and offer guidance you can trust
- Mental health support and career coaching for your personal and professional growth throughout your journey
- Culturally-competent support, with over 8% of providers on Maven identifying as LGBTQIA+ and 40% having strong clinical experience working with the LGBTQIA+ community



Although LGBTQIA+ people face more barriers to starting and raising their families, you can find the support and compassion you deserve on Maven. Maven is here for you through every step of your journey—sign up for free today at mavenclinic.com/join/allpaths