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Third-Party Reproduction Psychological Services

Oocyte Donor Recipient Consultations

Becoming parents through oocyte donation can be an exciting way to build a family, but it often takes parents some time to arrive at this choice. Prior to making this decision, parents are often asked by their reproductive endocrinologist to have a visit with a mental health professional. The visit is not intended to be a formal evaluation, and is for the purpose of helping potential parents with decision-making related to conceiving a child through donor oocytes. Emotions common to the process will be discussed in the consultation, and can be helpful in allowing an individual or a couple to decide if this is the best choice for them. By facilitating open, supportive communication between partners, a mental health professional can help individuals address concerns they may have prior to moving forward with treatment. Some areas of consideration that will be discussed during the consultation include:

- feelings related to the loss of genetic ties of the female partner
- coping skills for parents during the treatment process
- comfort levels with disclosure to the child, friends, and family members
- choices regarding embryos after a family is completed

Oocyte Donor Psychological Evaluations

Prior to becoming an oocyte donor, individuals are required to undergo a psychological evaluation by a mental health professional. Evaluations consist of two components, including a clinical interview and psychological testing. Through these components, it is determined whether the donor is psychologically prepared for their role in the third party reproduction process. As a part of the clinical interview, women are encouraged to consider a number of long-range implications in the medical, ethical, legal, and psychological arenas of oocyte donation. Donor candidates will be asked to consider the potential effects of oocyte donation on themselves, on potential children resulting from their donation, and on recipient parents. Questions during the interview relate to the following important topics:

- Motivation for becoming a donor
- Support from romantic partners, family members or friends for donation
- If the donor is not partnered, whether donation will be discussed with future partners, or potential children
- Comfort level with the time commitment and medical procedures required
- Acceptance of any potential unforeseen medical or psychological risks of donation
- Psychological, Developmental, and Medical History related to a donor and her family
- Questions related to a donor's Sexual History
- An ability to be comfortable with no relationship with a child who is genetically related to the donor

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Intended Parent Consultations

As an intended parent, you may have a lot of questions about how the process of surrogacy should work. The surrogacy relationship is a special one, and the purpose of the meeting is to help all of the parties involved to discuss expectations in order to keep communication strong and positive. We will also discuss whether you plan to disclose to your child or children that a surrogate was part of their birth story, as well as how you can disclose this to your child. The consultation is not a formal evaluation of whether you will make good parents, but a way to help explore common scenarios unique to the surrogacy that you may not have considered. Some specific topics which will be discussed include:

- Whether your expectations and the surrogate's expectations are clear regarding dietary preferences, exercise, and other prenatal care concerns
- The level of contact all parties are comfortable with throughout pregnancy and following delivery
- Relinquishment of your child or children to you, as an intended parent, at the hospital
- Ways of bonding with your child through surrogacy
- Common emotions that surface for intended parents and surrogates during the surrogacy process

Psychological Evaluations for Surrogacy Candidates

Surrogacy candidates are required to complete a psychological evaluation prior to developing a relationship with intended parents. If a surrogacy candidate has a spouse or significant other who lives with them, they will also undergo a psychological evaluation as being a surrogate requires a supportive partner. During a clinical interview, a surrogacy candidate will be asked a number of questions about their medical, psychiatric, social, and educational history, as well as preferences they have about the surrogacy process. A surrogate's significant other will be asked similar questions about their history and their comfort with their partner's preferences regarding the surrogacy process. Following the clinical interviews, psychological testing will be administered to surrogacy candidate. Testing will also be administered to the surrogacy candidate's partner if she has one. Several questions surrogacy candidates will be asked include:

- Which people the surrogate would like to have present in the delivery room
- Desired level of contact from the intended parents prior to and after pregnancy
- Comfort level with carrying multiples
- The number of in-vitro cycles the surrogacy candidate is willing to pursue
- The reason and motivation behind the woman's desire to become a surrogate
- Ways the surrogate can discuss surrogacy with their children