

TOOLKIT

# A Step-By-Step Toolkit

Empowering Your Community with  
Family Building Information



## *Introduction*

Aside from financial constraints, the biggest barrier LGBTQ people face on their paths to parenthood is lack of knowledge about their medical and legal options, and first steps. One way that community leaders, especially those outside of progressive urban centers, can combat this knowledge gap is by hosting educational events designed to arm their communities with all they need to get started building their families!

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## *What Does Your Community Need?*

Like all families, there are numerous ways that LGBTQ people can add children to their homes. From surrogacy and egg donation, intrauterine insemination, reciprocal IVF, and home inseminations to fostering, adopting, and coparenting, our families have choices! Before you dive too deeply into event planning, take some time to get a sense of the needs of your community. How are people planning to start or add to their families? What do people want to know about starting a family? Where are the gaps in family building education in your community? To learn the answers to these questions, you may consider:

- ▶ Using a Facebook poll if you have access to local groups
- ▶ Attending a gathering or event at the local LGBTQ center
- ▶ Sending out a poll through a local LGBTQ email listserv

## *Who Is Your Target Community?*

There are several themes that you can build a panel around depending on what you have determined to be your community's goals and general makeup. Once you have a sense of whom you are targeting, you will have a better idea of the type of panel you will need to develop. There is enough information out there to create a unique panel for any of the communities below, and the opportunity exists to create panels that comprehensively covers the needs of multiple communities. Those audiences include:

- ▶ People/couples who may utilize surrogacy
- ▶ People/couples who may need a sperm and/or egg donor
- ▶ Transgender/gender nonconforming individuals/couples
- ▶ People interested in foster care or adoption
- ▶ People/couples who want a family, but feel like family building is financially inaccessible
- ▶ Any mix of the above!

## *A Note About Inclusive Language*

It is recommended that you avoid focusing events on “gay men” or “lesbian women.” Many people in same-sex relationships may not identify as “gay” or “lesbian,” and even gender-specific language like “men” and “women” could leave out critical members of the community who would love to attend your event but don't identify with such gendered terms. Some sample names to consider include:

- ▶ Womb to Grow
- ▶ Family Building Panel
- ▶ Family Building Options for the LGBTQ Community
- ▶ Fostering Hope
- ▶ Building our Families

# Information Dissemination Method



We have found that bringing together a combination of experts in the field and parents who can share their lived experiences of family building makes for a compelling panel discussion. Your community's needs and demographics will determine your panelists, though we do recommend that you attempt to invite a parent whenever possible! **When choosing the experts, you are encouraged to consult Family Equality Council staff for recommendations of LGBTQ-friendly providers in your area!**

Below, you will find a description of the kinds of panels you may host and recommendations for the types of panelists you might invite and the topics you might cover. We do encourage you to seek out space that is uniquely queer-friendly, such as an LGBTQ center, LGBTQ-inclusive place of faith, or queer-run cafe or bookstore, to promote the safe space needed to engage in learning around such a personal topic.

**1** ***Building our Families via Surrogacy***  
Surrogacy laws vary state to state. Before considering this event, check your state's laws or touch base with a family law practitioner to learn more about legal provisions around gestational (surrogate is not also the egg donor) and traditional (surrogate also provides the egg) surrogacy.

***Suggested panelists:*** Surrogacy agency, family law or assisted reproduction attorney, fertility clinic, parent and/or surrogate

***Suggested topics:*** Traditional vs gestational surrogacy, general timeline to baby, financial planning for surrogacy, how to choose a surrogate, legal process and timeline

**2** ***Building our Families via Sperm Donation***  
This panel will go into great depth about the process of choosing a donor (known or unknown), preparing for insemination, and fertility-supports that might be needed along the way.

***Suggested panelists:*** Cryobank, fertility clinic, family law or assisted reproduction attorney, parent

***Suggested topics:*** Choosing a donor, known vs unknown donors and legal implications, preparing your body for pregnancy, at-home vs clinic inseminations, IUI vs IVF, reciprocal IVF

**3** ***Transgender Fertility Considerations***  
As many as half of all transgender people who do not have children want to become a parent, though most were never counseled on how transition might affect their fertility. This panel can cover the in's and out's of every aspect of building family biologically for the trans community, including transmasculine and transfeminine perspectives. It should also be inclusive of genderqueer and gender non-conforming communities.

***Suggested panelists:*** Trans-affirming cryobank for fertility preservation, reproductive endocrinologist or other fertility specialist with specific experience working with trans patients, trans biological parent

***Suggested topics:*** Sperm banking, egg freezing, the effects of hormones on long-term fertility, pregnancy post-testosterone, sperm production post-estrogen



## Information Dissemination Method

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### ***Building our Families via Adoption and/or Foster Care***

Research has shown that LGBTQ families are seven times more likely to foster and adopt than heterosexual families. We also know that the process can be overwhelming, especially when you live in a state that allows agencies to discriminate against LGBTQ prospective parents. This panel will highlight LGBTQ-friendly organizations and give participants an idea of what to expect from intake to placement.

***Suggested panelists:*** Foster care agency, private adoption agency, family law practitioner, parent

***Suggested topics:*** How to get started, the likelihood of being placed with an infant, adopting sibling groups and older kids, adopting LGBTQ kids, how the foster to adopt process works, financial implications for private adoptions, and timeline to placement

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### ***All the Ways to Build our Families***

This all-inclusive panel is great for those who truly are undecided about how they hope to build their families. This panel will not go into as much depth as the more targeted panels above. Instead, more general information will be provided about all of the different options.

***Suggested panelists:*** fertility clinic, foster care agency, family law practitioner, parent

***Suggested topics:*** Any and all of the above.



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### ***Financially Accessible Family Building***

It is a commonly-held belief in the queer community that families are not an option for those of us who aren't securely middle or upper-middle class. This event can provide legally- and medically-sound options for creating families biologically and through adoption that feel more financially accessible to a broader range of our community. Known donors, at-home inseminations, foster care and foster-to-adopt, trans pregnancy and fertility, and co-parenting/non-traditional parenting and family models can be discussed.

***Suggested panelists:*** Parents who can discuss co-parenting and known donors, local foster care agency, midwife who does at home inseminations, family law practitioner

***Suggested topics:*** Legal implications of using a known donor, how-to of home inseminations, legal implications of traditional surrogacy, foster care and adoption timelines and how-tos, co-parenting with a member of the opposite sex in a platonic partnership

# *Panelist Expectations*

Once you have secured your panelists, you will want to provide them with some general expectations. These may include any combination of the following. A sample agreement is also included at the end of this toolkit.

The speaker will:

- ▶ Promote the event in advance via social media and their organization's online calendar and/or listserv (if applicable)
- ▶ Refrain from self-promotion or practice-promotion and focus on offering unbiased objective information
- ▶ Not publicly post photos that include session attendees
- ▶ Address topics outlined by event host
- ▶ Adhere to time-limit set for presentation
- ▶ Keep in mind the purpose of the event which is to educate and inform the community



# *Panelist Talking Points*

You will also want to provide your panelists with talking points to cover based on the knowledge gaps you are trying to address with the event. These talking points will obviously change based on the type of panel you are hosting. In general, though, you will want to develop an outline for the event with the information you expect to be covered by each panelist.

**If you would like assistance developing an agenda specific to your event, please contact Family Equality Council staff.**



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## Empowering Your Community

# *Nice Additions*



There are a few additional perks you might consider if you have the capacity and interest.

- ▶ Ask local holistic health providers (chiropractors, acupuncturists, naturopaths, doulas) to be present in the audience to address questions on enhancing fertility.
- ▶ Seek out giveaways from local providers and panelists that you can offer attendees (discount on first consultation at fertility clinic, free acupuncture session, etc.).

We know that 63% of LGBTQ individuals are considering expanding or building their families in the coming years. Empowering your community members with the information they need to take these first steps on their paths to parenthood can literally change their lives. If at any point in your process you would like assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out to Family Equality Council staff. We are here to help!

# Sample Agreement

This Agreement is entered into between \_\_\_\_\_ (“*Host*”) and \_\_\_\_\_ (“*Speaker*”). Speaker agrees to attend the event as promised and to appear on time or to provide a viable replacement in case of emergency. Host must approve the replacement speaker prior to the event (to the extent practicable depending upon the nature of the emergency requiring a substitute speaker). No compensation is provided in exchange for speaking at the event.

Speaker agrees to promote the event in advance via:

- ▶ Social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter
- ▶ On their homepage and/or website calendar
- ▶ To local businesses, physicians and/or other localities of note, i.e. libraries, coffee shops, etc.

**Note:** Press releases, advertising or other promotional pieces pertaining to the event must be approved by Host prior to dissemination.

Speaker and their staff agree to adhere to the following guidelines during the presentation:

- ▶ Will refrain from self-promotion or practice promotion, i.e., will not mention success rates, patient or client testimonials or comparisons to other physicians or attorneys
- ▶ Will refrain from “*I am the best*” language
- ▶ Will refrain from solicitation of the attendees
- ▶ Will refrain from recording or photographing the event or any portion of the event
- ▶ Will refrain from taking and/or posting via social media, on their website, via email, or any other means any photos that include attendees and audience members, to properly protect the privacy interests of those whom we seek to assist
- ▶ Will address the topics as outlined by the Host staff
- ▶ Will adhere to the time limit for the presentation
- ▶ Will provide educational material and their business cards for the educational gift bag
- ▶ Will bring no more than five employees and/or colleagues to the event and will provide a head count prior to the event; they will be seated only after all participants have been seated
- ▶ Will not show, display or disseminate any video or promotional materials of any type at the event without Host’s permission at least one week prior to the event
- ▶ Will keep in mind the purpose of the event which is to educate and inform the attendees

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***Agreed and Accepted:***

**PRINT NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_