

California has become something of a gold standard for LGBTQ+ family building, and that is very clear in Riverside and the broader Inland Empire. Same-sex couples, single intended parents, transgender parents, and non-traditional families all routinely use surrogacy in California, with strong legal protection and a robust network of clinics, attorneys, and agencies.

If you are a same-sex couple in Riverside wondering whether you can use surrogacy in California, the short answer is yes, you can. The longer, more practical answer is that it is worth understanding the legal landscape, the types of surrogacy, the real costs, and how to choose a reputable surrogacy agency near you that genuinely understands LGBTQ+ families.

I have worked with intended parents and surrogates across California for years, and Riverside families often share the same mix of hope and anxiety. They want to know if surrogacy is legal, who the legal parents will be, whether they need a lawyer, what the surrogate's rights are, and, very bluntly, how much all of this will cost.

Let us walk through what actually matters when you are building your family through surrogacy in Riverside.

## **Is Surrogacy Legal in California for Same-Sex Couples?**

Yes. Surrogacy is legal in California for married couples, unmarried partners, and single individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. California is one of the most surrogacy-friendly states in the country, and that is a major reason California is a popular state for surrogacy.

State law, shaped by both statutes and case law, recognizes and protects gestational surrogacy arrangements when they are properly documented. Courts across California, including those serving Riverside County, routinely issue pre-birth orders establishing intended parents as the legal parents, even when neither parent is genetically related to the child.

The key legal requirements for surrogacy in California typically include:

- A written surrogacy agreement signed before any medical procedures begin
- Independent legal counsel for both the intended parents and the surrogate
- Clear terms covering compensation, medical decision-making, and parentage
- Compliance with California Family Code provisions that govern assisted reproduction and surrogacy

When these elements are in place, judges in Riverside County are generally comfortable confirming parentage for same-sex couples. A male couple, a female couple, or a non-binary partner with a same-sex spouse can all be named as legal parents.

The difference between California and less supportive states is that you do not have to rely on post-birth adoption or second-parent adoption just to secure parental rights. Surrogacy, when done correctly, can give you legal certainty before your child is even born.

## **Who Are the Legal Parents in a Surrogacy Arrangement?**

In a properly drafted California surrogacy agreement, the intended parents are the legal parents, not the surrogate. That is true for heterosexual, same-sex, and single intended parents.

The usual path looks like this. Once there is a valid gestational carrier agreement and a confirmed pregnancy, your surrogacy attorney files for a pre-birth order. A judge reviews the agreement and the supporting declarations. If

everything is in order, the court issues an order establishing you as the legal parents. That order is then used so your names go directly on the birth certificate.

Same-sex couples often worry that the non-genetic parent will be treated differently. In California, that generally does not happen if the surrogacy is set up correctly. Courts recognize intended parenthood, not just genetic connection. A two-mom family using donor sperm and donor eggs, for example, can still both be recognized as legal parents.

Even though California law is friendly, you still need a lawyer for surrogacy. The hospital in Riverside or elsewhere will look to the court order and the birth plan. The birth certificate office will look to the court order. If the paperwork is weak or incomplete, you can end up with delays and unnecessary stress right when you should be focused on your baby.

## **What Rights Does a Surrogate Have in California?**

A surrogate in California is not just a vessel. She has independent rights, and a well-run surrogacy agency treats her that way.

California law requires that the surrogate has her own attorney, paid for by the intended parents but chosen by her. She must sign the agreement before starting injectable medications or embryo transfer. She also retains bodily autonomy. No contract can truly force her to undergo a procedure or override emergency medical decisions.

A clear surrogacy agreement will set out:

- Her right to medical care and choice of certain providers, within agreed parameters
- How pregnancy-related expenses and lost wages are paid
- Boundaries around contact, communication, and social media
- Expectations around termination or selective reduction, and how those decisions will be handled

For most surrogates, respect and transparency matter as much as compensation. When both sides feel heard and protected, the relationship tends to stay stable and healthy, which directly supports your future child.

## **Gestational vs Traditional Surrogacy: What Same-Sex Couples Need to Know**

If you are new to this, the terminology can be confusing. There are two main types of surrogacy, but in California, almost all arrangements are gestational.

Gestational surrogacy means the surrogate has no genetic connection to the baby. An embryo created using the sperm and egg from the intended parents or donors is transferred to the surrogate's uterus. For a male same-sex couple, that usually looks like one partner's sperm and either an anonymous or known egg donor. For a female same-sex couple, one partner's eggs or donor eggs and donor sperm.

Traditional surrogacy is when the surrogate's own egg is used, so she is both the genetic and gestational mother. This can involve intrauterine insemination (IUI) rather than IVF. In California, traditional surrogacy is legally far more complex and rare, particularly for agencies. Many reputable surrogacy agencies will not handle traditional surrogacy at all because the legal risk is higher, and parentage can be more easily challenged.

If you are a same-sex couple in Riverside, expect almost every reputable agency and attorney to guide you firmly toward gestational surrogacy, for safety, clarity, and smoother court orders.

# How Does the Surrogacy Process Work, Step by Step?

Surrogacy looks like a single dream from the outside. In reality, it is a series of stages, each with its own timeline and emotional weight. The entire surrogacy process often takes 15 to 24 months from the time you formally start with an agency to the baby's birth.

First, you choose a clinic and a surrogacy agency. Some intended parents work with a fertility clinic in Riverside or nearby, others travel to Los Angeles or Orange County. Many agencies have existing relationships with specific clinics. It is smart to involve a surrogacy attorney early as well, even if the agency says they can recommend one later.

Next, you complete screening and profiling. You will provide medical records, background information, sometimes psychological evaluations, and a clear statement of what you want and what you cannot accept. That includes views on termination, number of embryos transferred, and openness to twins.

Then comes matching. How long it takes to be matched with a surrogate in Riverside or Southern California varies. A realistic range is 2 to 8 months, depending on your criteria and flexibility. High compensation requests, narrow preferences on location, or strict demands on diet and lifestyle can extend that timeline.

Once the agency identifies a potential surrogate, there is a match meeting. Same-sex couples sometimes worry how a surrogate feels about LGBTQ+ parents. A good agency will screen for true comfort, not just tolerance. The match meeting is your opportunity to feel out chemistry, values, and communication style.

If everyone wants to move forward, attorneys draft and finalize the surrogacy agreement. Only after the contract is signed does the medical process start in full. The surrogate completes medical clearance at the clinic, then cycle coordination begins, including medications to prepare her body for embryo transfer.

Embryo transfer itself is a brief procedure, but there is a lot riding on it emotionally. Many intended parents come to the clinic, even from Riverside to Los Angeles, to be present. Not every transfer leads to pregnancy, so you want clarity on how many tries are built into your financial arrangement.

Once pregnant, the surrogate continues regular OB care, usually close to her home. Same-sex intended parents can often attend key appointments by video or in person. Your attorney will time the pre-birth order process so that it is in place before delivery. Around the third trimester, you, your surrogate, and sometimes your agency will finalize a birth plan with the hospital, so there are no surprises in the delivery room.

Finally, your baby is born, usually at a local hospital near the surrogate, such as those serving Riverside County or neighboring areas. With a solid pre-birth order, you are the legal parents immediately. The hospital staff will hand the baby to you, not the surrogate, and your names will be placed on the birth certificate consistent with the court order.

## How Much Does Surrogacy Cost in California?

The cost of surrogacy in California is significant, and Riverside is no exception. All-in, many couples see a total range from roughly \$120,000 to \$200,000 or more, depending on clinic fees, donor costs, insurance, and whether there are complications or multiple transfers.

Several major pieces make up that total:

- Surrogacy agency fees
- Surrogate compensation and benefits
- Medical expenses (IVF, medications, testing, delivery)

- Legal fees for both sides and court work
- Insurance costs and gap coverage
- Travel, lodging, and incidental expenses

How much does a surrogacy agency charge? Many California agencies have base fees that range anywhere from \$20,000 to \$40,000 or more. Those fees are not the entire cost, just the agency's portion for their services.

# RIVERSIDE SURROGACY AGENCIES



Southern California Surrogacy

## Southern California Surrogacy

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How much do surrogates get paid in Riverside and surrounding counties? First-time gestational carriers in Southern California commonly receive base compensation in the range of \$45,000 to \$65,000, with experienced surrogates sometimes earning more. On top of that base, there are additional payments for embryo transfers, invasive procedures, maternity clothing, lost wages, and sometimes childcare or housekeeping allowances.

What is included in surrogacy agency fees varies, but typically covers recruitment and screening of surrogates, coordination of communication between you, the surrogate, and the clinic, basic case management, and some emotional support resources. Some agencies include only the first match in their fee, others include rematching if a match falls through before pregnancy.

Are there financing options for surrogacy? Yes, but they are limited. Some intended parents use personal loans, home equity, fertility-specific financing companies, or employer family-building benefits. Larger tech, legal, and healthcare employers sometimes offer surrogacy and IVF reimbursement up to certain caps. It is worth talking to a financial planner who has actually worked with surrogacy clients, so you are not over-reliant on high-interest credit.

## Is Surrogacy Covered by Insurance in California?

This is one of the most misunderstood pieces. Is surrogacy covered by insurance in California? Pieces of it may be, but there is no broad mandate requiring insurance plans to cover surrogacy.

Usually, your own health insurance will not cover the surrogate's pregnancy. Instead, you either use the surrogate's existing plan, if it allows surrogacy (many exclude it), or you purchase a separate maternity policy or surrogate-friendly plan. This is a place where a good agency and attorney are invaluable, because using a plan that quietly excludes surrogacy can lead to denied claims and very large unexpected bills.

Your health insurance may cover your own fertility evaluation or the egg retrieval if one of you is providing the eggs. But donor eggs, donor sperm, embryo creation for surrogacy, and the surrogate's care are often self-pay or only partially covered.

Given the size of these costs, you should have an insurance review built into your early planning, ideally before you sign with an agency. Too many same-sex couples focus on emotional match first and then discover a six-figure coverage gap.

## **What Are the Requirements to Become a Surrogate in California?**

Understanding surrogate screening helps same-sex intended parents feel more comfortable with the process. Good surrogacy agencies in Riverside County and across California use strict criteria.

Typical requirements to become a surrogate in California include:

- Age range commonly between 21 and 40, sometimes slightly higher
- At least one prior uncomplicated pregnancy and delivery
- No major chronic medical conditions or serious mental health diagnoses
- Stable living situation and non-smoking status
- BMI and health markers within clinic guidelines

What disqualifies you from being a surrogate often includes uncontrolled medical conditions, a history of preterm birth or severe pregnancy complications, substance abuse, or certain criminal history. Well-run agencies also screen for genuine emotional readiness and family support, not just physical health.

Can you choose who you are a surrogate for? Yes. Surrogates are not assigned to intended parents. They see profiles, meet intended parents, and have the absolute right to decline a [Riverside Best Surrogacy Agencies](#) match. Many surrogates specifically seek out same-sex couples. It is not unusual to hear a surrogate say, "A gay couple helped me feel safe when I came out as a teenager, now I want to help a gay couple have a family."

## **Can Single Individuals and Same-Sex Couples Use Surrogacy Agencies?**

Who can use a surrogate in California is broad. Married couples, unmarried partners, and single individuals can all pursue surrogacy, regardless of orientation or gender. So yes, single people can use a surrogacy agency, and same-sex couples use surrogacy in California every day.

The main practical requirement is that you can pass the agency's screening and demonstrate the resources and stability to raise a child. Single intended parents, especially single men using egg donation and surrogacy, are fairly common in California clinics. Agencies may ask more detailed questions about your support system, work schedule, and childcare plans, but the law does not bar you.

For same-sex couples, the key difference is often logistical rather than legal. You may have to decide whose sperm or eggs will be used, whether you will fertilize eggs with both partners' sperm, how you feel about full genetic

siblings vs half-siblings, and how you want to talk about those choices with your future child. A therapist or counselor who has worked with LGBTQ+ family building can be helpful here.

## Surrogacy Agencies vs Independent Surrogacy

Some intended parents in Riverside ask, "Are surrogacy agencies worth it? Could we just find a surrogate ourselves and work with a clinic?" That is the difference between an agency and independent surrogacy.

In an agency-based journey, the agency recruits, screens, and matches surrogates, coordinates communication, helps manage logistics and payments, and keeps the process moving. In independent surrogacy, you locate a surrogate on your own, sometimes through a friend or online, then handle most of the coordination directly with your attorney and clinic.

Independent surrogacy can save some portion of the agency fee, but it shifts work and risk to you. Screening a surrogate's background, confirming her insurance, navigating awkward financial conversations, and handling conflict during the pregnancy are not small tasks. I have seen independent matches work beautifully, especially when there is a long-standing friendship. I have also seen them fall apart over miscommunication that a neutral third party could have prevented.

If your budget is extremely tight, independent surrogacy in California may be legitimate to consider, but only with a very experienced surrogacy attorney tightly involved and a clinic that is comfortable with that model. For most first-time same-sex parents, a solid agency provides structure and emotional buffering that is worth the fee.

## How Do I Choose a Surrogacy Agency in Riverside?

There is no single best surrogacy agency in Riverside, just as there is no single "best" doctor. The better question is how to find a reputable surrogacy agency near you that fits your priorities and values.

For LGBTQ+ intended parents, you want an agency that does not just passively "allow" same-sex couples, but actively understands your needs. That shows up in the language on their website, the intake forms, and the way staff talk about family structures.

When you evaluate what to look for in a surrogacy agency, consider their experience with same-sex parents, relationships with Riverside County hospitals, transparency on costs, surrogate screening standards, and how they handle conflict or rematches.

Here are focused questions worth asking a surrogacy agency during consultations:

- How many same-sex couples have you worked with in the last few years, and can any of them speak with us about their experience?
- Where do most of your surrogates live, and do you have experience with Riverside County courts and hospitals?
- What is included in your surrogacy agency fees, and what are common additional costs we should budget for?
- How long does it typically take to be matched with a surrogate who is fully cleared and ready?
- How do you support both the surrogate and the intended parents if there is a disagreement or a medical complication?

Pay attention not just to the content of the answers, but to the tone. Do they speak respectfully about surrogates and intended parents? Do they give realistic timeframes and cost ranges, or only best-case scenarios? An honest "it depends" is usually a better sign than a polished but vague promise.

# Where Can I Find Surrogacy Agencies in Riverside County?

Some agencies are physically located in Riverside or the Inland Empire, others are in Los Angeles, Orange County, or San Diego but regularly serve Riverside intended parents and surrogates. You do not have to choose an agency with an office five minutes from your house, but local familiarity helps with hospital relationships and court processes.

Look at:

Local referrals from fertility clinics that serve Riverside. Professional recommendations from attorneys who specialize in California surrogacy. LGBTQ+ community groups and family-building organizations that have seen multiple families go through different agencies.

When you search online for “surrogacy agency in Riverside County” or similar phrases, treat glossy marketing carefully. Use consultations to dig for specifics. Ask directly about their success rate of surrogacy cases making it to a live birth, and how they define that rate. Some agencies count only embryo transfers, others count from match to birth.

## How Long Does the Surrogacy Process Take?

From first consultation to baby in arms, most same-sex couples in California should plan for 1.5 to 2 years. A rough breakdown:

The first 2 to 4 months for research, clinic and agency selection, and screening. Another 2 to 8 months to be matched with a surrogate and finalize contracts. 1 to 3 months to coordinate cycles and complete a successful embryo transfer. 9 months of pregnancy.

There are shorter cases, especially when embryos are already created and a ready surrogate appears quickly. And there are longer ones, particularly when there are failed transfers, rematches, or complex legal or medical issues. You serve yourselves well by planning financially and emotionally for the longer end of the range, then treating anything faster as a gift.

## Why California, and Why Riverside, Are Strong Options for LGBTQ+ Surrogacy

California combines three things that rarely coexist in other places: a clear legal framework that recognizes surrogacy and protects intended parents, experienced professionals at every step of the process, and a cultural environment that largely accepts and supports same-sex families.

Riverside and the wider Inland Empire add some practical benefits. Surrogates in this region sometimes have lower cost-of-living needs than those closer to the Los Angeles or San Francisco core, which can translate into slightly more manageable compensation expectations. There is also a growing pool of surrogates who are already familiar with the legal and medical systems used by agencies that focus on gay and lesbian intended parents.

Surrogacy is not simple. It is not cheap. It is not without risk. But for many same-sex couples in Riverside, it is the most direct and affirming path to a biological child and a birth certificate that reflects both parents from day one.

If you are starting this journey, treat your first steps as information-gathering rather than commitment. Speak with more than one agency, meet with a surrogacy attorney before signing large checks, and ask to talk with other LGBTQ+ parents who have completed surrogacy in California. Real stories from people two or three years ahead of you will do more to ground your expectations than any brochure.

From a legal standpoint, from a medical standpoint, and from lived experience, the answer is yes: same-sex couples can use surrogacy in California, and Riverside offers a practical, inclusive landscape in which to do it. The rest is about finding the right team, setting realistic expectations, and giving yourselves permission to want this deeply and pursue it with clear eyes.