

An Analysis of Cost & Timeline

of the Different Paths to Fatherhood



Surrogacy



Adoption



Foster Care

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Surrogacy

Surrogacy provides an opportunity for queer men to have a biological connection to their child. In a gestational surrogacy arrangement, a woman (known as a surrogate or gestational carrier) is compensated for carrying a baby to term for a gay couple, or single gay man — who then become the newborn’s sole legal parent(s). Most surrogacy journeys involve in vitro fertilization (IVF) — the process of creating embryos in a fertility center using a sperm source from an intended father and an egg donor.



Cost Breakdown

\$140k - \$220K or more

Agency fees: \$35K-\$55K

IVF clinic: \$30K-\$50K

Gestational carrier & egg donor: \$60k - \$80k

Insurance: \$15K-\$30K

These ranges are merely meant to provide an insight into the costs of becoming a dad via surrogacy. The cost of your journey could be much more or less depending on your unique set of circumstances.



Cost Explanation

Agency Fees

Costs can vary depending on the size of the agency and services offered. Larger, full-service agencies may have a higher fee because costs include a support team for intended parents (IP) and full management of their journey. Ask to see a detailed list of costs in order to make a true comparison between agencies — if a certain fee is covered by one agency but not another, that may be an incremental cost you’ll need to consider.

IVF Center

Costs can vary based on: your location, insurance coverage, number of embryo transfers involved, and whether or not your center covers multiple IVF transfers as part of their fee structure. The costs increase further if you choose to conduct pre-implantation genetic testing of embryos, a procedure that can help detect chromosomal abnormalities.

Gestational Carrier and Egg Donor

Your gestational carrier will be paid a base fee, plus additional benefits and compensation throughout the journey. Some agencies will pay carriers a flat rate, while others will spread payments out over the course of the journey. A carrier’s compensation can vary depending on several factors. If she is an experienced surrogate, her compensation will be higher. Her location will play a role, too — some states, like California, are considered more desirable than others for ease of travel and proximity to prominent IVF centers. In general, surrogates are paid between \$50,000-\$60,000, though fees can stretch up to \$80,000. For egg donors, intended parents cover all costs associated with donor insurance, compensation, legal fees, travel and accommodations. An egg donor is typically compensated between \$5,000-\$10,000. These fees vary based on the donor’s experience and if she exhibits certain highly-desirable characteristics.

Insurance

Costs vary depending on whether or not your surrogate has her own insurance. Different surrogacy agencies use different insurances for coverage, so it’s important to understand how insurance plans work — some coverage may be mandatory at one agency, for instance, but optional at another.



Process Time

18 to 24 months

(total process time)

3 to 12+ months (Surrogate Matching and Embryo Creation)

Agency Adoption

Agency adoption is one of two main ways to adopt an infant in the United States, the other being independent or “private” adoption. If choosing an agency adoption, gay men will work with a state-licensed adoption agency to become the legal parents of a child placed in the agency’s care by a birth mother or birth parents. In an agency adoption, your professionals will handle the entire adoption process, start to finish, including the work of finding and matching you with a birth family.



Cost breakdown

\$20-65K or more

- Birth parent expenses:** \$0-\$15K+
- Agency fees:** \$15K-\$30K+
- Lawyer fees:** \$3K-\$10K
- Home study:** \$2.5K-\$5K
- Post placement:** \$1.5K-\$5K
- Travel and accommodation:** \$0K-\$1K+

These ranges are merely meant to provide an insight into the costs of becoming a dad via the domestic agency adoption. The cost of your journey could be much more or less depending on your unique set of circumstances.



Cost Explanation

Agency Fees

The fee charged by your agency can vary anywhere from \$15,000-\$30,000 or more, paid over the course of a set fee schedule. It’s important to inquire how your agency structures its fees. Some may charge a higher fixed fee, meaning your total cost will remain roughly the same, regardless of the time it takes to complete your adoption. Other agencies have fee structures that are dependent on the overall time it takes to complete your adoption. Some agencies offer a sliding scale, depending on your income, which may also impact your overall costs.

Birth Mother’s Expenses

The costs associated with a birth mother’s medical and living expenses in an agency adoption vary. Typical costs include those associated with maternity-related medical and hospital costs, temporary living expenses, counseling, legal fees, travel costs, and meals. Other types of costs — such as those covering vacations, permanent housing, or those directly related to the adoption process — are often explicitly forbidden by many states.

Home Study

The home study is the legal process that every adoptive parent must go through, regardless of the path they choose, in order to become adoptive parents. In an agency adoption, your adoption agency will facilitate your home study process. The costs of a home study typically ranges from \$1,000-\$3,000. These fees cover the costs of your caseworker, legal paper work, training, and more. These fees differ across agencies and across states.



Process Time

1 to 3 years

(total process time)

- 3 to 6 months (Home study)
- 9 months to 2 years (Matching)
- 3 to 6 months (Finalization)

Independent Adoption

Independent or “private” adoption is one of two main ways to adopt a newborn in the United States — the other being “agency” adoption. In an “independent” adoption, you will work directly with a lawyer to find a birth family — the biggest variable in costs in an independent adoption comes via advertising fees. How much you spend depends on how much advertising you do, and what kind. Independent adoption is not legal in all states, and even where it is, regulations vary. It’s important to consult with an adoption attorney prior to starting an independent adoption process.



Cost breakdown

\$15-50K or more

Birth parent expenses: \$0-\$15K+

Advertising fees: \$1K-\$10K+

Lawyer fees: \$3K-\$10K

Home study: \$2.5K-\$5K

Post placement: \$1.5K-\$5K

Travel and accommodation: \$0K-\$1K+

These ranges are merely meant to provide an insight into the costs of becoming a dad via the independent adoption. The cost of your journey could be much more or less depending on your unique set of circumstances.



Cost Explanation

Birth mother’s expenses

The costs associated with a birth mother’s medical and living expenses when adopting independently vary. Typical costs may include those associated with maternity-related medical and hospital costs, temporary living expenses, counseling, legal fees, travel costs, and meals. Other types of costs, such as those covering vacations, permanent housing, or those directly related to the adoption process, are often explicitly forbidden by many states.

Home Study

The home study is the legal process that every adoptive parent must go through, regardless of the path they choose, in order to become adoptive parents. In an independent adoption, you will be responsible for covering the costs of your home study, which typically range from \$1,000-\$3,000. These fees cover the costs of your caseworker, legal paper work, training, and more. When adopting independently, you will need to hire qualified professionals to conduct your home study process. These fees differ across agencies and across states.

Advertising

If you pursue an independent adoption, you will need to advertise your desire to become an adoptive dad in ways that put you in front of potential birth mothers as well as their advisors / loved ones. As you’ll learn, there are numerous opportunities to spend your advertising dollars, and you will have to set your own budget based on what feels right to you. Advertising is not legal in all states, so be sure to check with your lawyer prior to starting the process.



Process Time

1 to 2 years

(total process time)

International Adoption

International adoption allows queer men living in the United States to become the legal parents of a child or children who are citizens of a foreign country. Adoptions from foreign countries have decreased in recent years due to stricter guidelines put in place by an international treaty called the Hague Convention. Many countries also have restrictions in place preventing gay, bi and trans men and couples, as well as single men, from adopting their citizens. Still, it is possible to for queer men to adopt from certain countries abroad.



Cost breakdown

\$25-55K or more

Home study: \$2K-\$5K

Professional services fees: \$14K-\$18.5K

Third party fees: \$1.5K-\$6K

Post adoption: \$500-\$2.5K

Country program fees: \$2.5K-\$5K+

Travel and accommodation: \$1.5K-\$15K

Based on expenses for two international country programs run by Spence-Chapin in South Africa and Colombia. Expenses vary widely depending on the country.



Cost Explanation

Birth mother's expenses

The costs associated with a birth mother's medical and living expenses in international adoption vary. Typical costs may include those associated with maternity-related medical and hospital costs, temporary living expenses, counseling, legal fees, travel costs, and meals. Other types of costs, such as those covering vacations, permanent housing, or those directly related to the adoption process, are often explicitly forbidden by many countries.

Home Study

The home study is the process that every adoptive parent must go through, regardless of the path they choose before they can legally become adoptive parents. In international adoption, the adoptive parent will be responsible for covering the costs of the home study, which range from \$2.5K to \$5K, and cover the costs of your case worker, legal paper work, and more.

Immigration and Documentation

When adopting internationally, you will be responsible for covering the costs of securing proper citizenship and all necessary documentation for your child. The costs of these fees can vary between \$2,000-\$6,000, depending on the country you are adopting from. Adopting abroad will also require adoptive parents to fly and stay in the host country for a period of time before finalizing the adoption. This time frame usually lasts at least a week or two, depending on the country. You will be responsible for covering your own travel and accommodations during your stay.



Process Time

1 to 5 years

(Placement and finalization length of time vary widely by country)

Foster-Adopt

The foster care system in the United States allows queer men to become the temporary or permanent guardians of a child, or sibling group, currently in the care of the state. There are over 400,000 children in the foster care system in the United States. The average age of a child in foster care is 8 years old. It's important to note that the primary goal of foster care is reunification with the child's birth family. However, for some children in foster care, reunification is not possible — in these cases, children become "legally freed" for permanent placement in an adoptive home.



Cost breakdown

\$0-5K

These costs are reimbursable

State agency: \$0K

Private agency: \$1-2K+

"House ready" expenses: \$0K+

Adoption attorney: \$500-\$1.2K

These ranges are merely meant to provide an insight into the costs of becoming a dad via the foster care system. The cost of your journey could be much more or less depending on your unique set of circumstances.



Resources

The foster-adopt process is free to low cost and comes with resources and support that other paths to adoption lack. Most costs, such as those associated with your legal needs, home study, and parenting courses, are reimbursable through the federal adoption tax credit. Foster parents are also provided a monthly stipend to help offset the costs of childrearing. The amount varies widely by state, but generally will fall between \$300-\$1,000. This stipend will continue until your child reaches adulthood, an age that ranges from 18-21 depending on the state.



Cost Explanation

Home Study

The home study is the legal process that every adoptive parent must go through, regardless of the path they choose, in order to become adoptive parents. The cost of a home study typically ranges from \$1,000-\$3,000. These fees cover the costs of your caseworker, legal paper work, training, and more. When adopting through the foster care system, however, these fees are typically reimbursed back to the foster parent. Children in the foster care system likely experience neglect and/or abuse — so your home study will also likely require additional training to help ensure you are prepared to parent a child with special needs. Any out-of-pocket expense for this training, however, is also typically reimbursed to the parent.

Adoption Attorney

It's the responsibility of the foster-adoptive family to hire an adoption attorney to complete your foster-adopt process. But this cost is reimbursed by the state once the adoption is finalized.



Process Time

6 to 9 months

(Average time to complete the home study, training courses, and receive first foster care placement)