

## Egg Donors & the Economy – Who is Exploiting Whom?

Well, after all of the news of recent of egg donors and the economy being shoved down our throats from press releases, news articles and news programs, I woke up this morning with a new concern about all of this.

Shouldn't we be concerned about this rise in donors? Who is Exploiting Whom, if at all? That is why we, as an industry, need to make certain that no one is exploiting anyone. In fact, we need to ensure that there is no abuse on either side – by the agencies, lawyers, parents, and clinics, as well as on the side of the donors themselves. As a Reproductive Lawyer and the Founder of an Egg Donation & Surrogacy Agency, I have a vested interest in ensuring that this is done sooner than later.

With that in mind, I think that we need to be concerned that the state of the economy may actually cause more women to become donors by not thinking about what they are actually doing and by not considering the risks. Which, in turn, can leave open the possibility that the donors may start the process, get accepted, get selected by parent(s), undergo testing at the cost of the parent(s), who then back out once they realize what this medical procedure actually entails? Or, donors who go forward because they need the money without really thinking through what they are doing? Who loses in this case? Who suffers emotionally? At what cost?

On the other end of the spectrum, shouldn't we also be concerned about the donor's authenticity? Desperation creates the environment for changing one's history, medical or otherwise – does it not? If one needs money so badly, why not make oneself into the poster of good health, good family history and a great education?

With these points in mind, I want to make certain that those couples/individuals looking for an egg donor or the donors looking to donate, do their research first on the agency or clinic where they select their donor or select to be a donor as follows:

1. Has the agency verified the donor's credentials?
2. Have those credentials been sent directly from the education institute or college or were they sent directly by the donor?
3. Has the agency obtained the donor's medical records from previous cycles? Has the donor actually been screened by the agency?
4. What does their actual screening consist of? Remember, numbers are not everything, as *quality is much more important than quantity* – so it is important to question those agencies that claim to have 1,000 donors or a new batch of donors from the economy.

5. Has the agency, lawyer, or clinic provided you, as the potential donor, an opportunity to speak with a physician regarding the potential risks? Have you had the opportunity to speak with a psychologist? Have you had all of your questions answered?

Yes, the economy can certainly cause a woman to make a decision to become an egg donor (or a surrogate mother) for the compensation that it provides, but also make certain that these donors (and surrogates) are not just in it for the money – they need to understand the entire process and they are moving forward with a clear sense of how they are helping someone create the family that they have always wanted and dreamed of, as well as understand all of the potential medical and psychological risks that are actually involved.

As an industry, we all need to make certain that all parties, the donor, the parents and the future child, are protected. I know what my staff and I do to ensure that this is taken care of. In fact, we continually are revising and adjusting our protocol to adapt to change in the industry. Shouldn't we all?

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