



baby2mom Egg Donation and Surrogacy Programme **Psychological Assessment for Surrogacy Programs**

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SURROGACY PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

It is the policy of all clinics that each surrogate be assessed psychologically, and that a full report be provided for the doctors, the lawyers and the intended parents. The report provided is thus a medico-legal report, such as those required for custody cases and the like. Until such time as the surrogacy law changes, much of the responsibility rests with the psychologist in making the decisions as to the suitability of the surrogate.

The purpose of the assessment is to assess the psychological readiness of the surrogate, as well as the match between the surrogate and the intended parents. This is done in order to protect all the parties involved:

- ✚ The intended parents - in order to put their mind at ease about the ability of the surrogate to give the baby up as well as providing an arena in which their expectations can be put across to the surrogate;
- ✚ The surrogate - the purpose of the assessment with regards to the surrogate is to assess the psychological readiness of the surrogate, in order to assess her readiness to undergo the process as well as the psychological consequences on her individually, her relationship and her children, should she have any. The report is thorough in detailing any presence of psychological disorders, any history of psychological disorders as well as predictions of future functioning

(SEE ADDENDUM 1). The report addresses the needs and wants of the surrogate as well as the expectations she has of the process as well as any difficulties she may experience. Her motivations are addressed along with relevant support systems during the process;

- ✚ The relationship between the two parties. It is important that the relevant parties are comfortable with each other, and sometimes the proposed relationship is not ideal, even though the surrogate is psychologically able to go ahead with the process. This might entail that the surrogate meet with other prospective parents, and that the intended parents interview other potential surrogates;
- ✚ Establishing that the expectations of both the surrogate and the intended parent/s are comparable.

The assessment process:

- ✓ First session: Intended parents: initial interview (unless this is an international process; where it is sometimes impossible to have the IP's here prior to the process)
- ✓ Second session: Surrogate: initial interview (preferably to bring her husband if she is married)
- ✓ Third session: Surrogate
- ✓ A double session is required for the surrogate as the report is detailed and the assessment comprises of various psychometric tests. If the surrogate wants the sessions on one day, she must book a double appointment with Kim.
- ✓ Subsequent sessions may be necessary if the surrogate has children that may need interviewing and/or depending on whether there are pertinent issues that need to be addressed. Sometimes it is necessary that all the respective parties meet together if there are issues that need to be clarified (not compulsory - depends on the case)
- ✓ A report will be ready in two weeks along with recommendations.
- ✓ Following advice from attorneys in the field of surrogacy, the fees for the above service has been revised. The total cost of the report, typing and binding: R2000. This is a medico-legal report. It is to accompany the parties to the

attorneys/social workers involved in the case. It is thorough and detailed, outlining both parties expectations.

- ✓ The practice is a cash practice but charges medical aid rates. Most medical aids reimburse the sessions (depending on the type of scheme) for the intended parents, and should the surrogate require supportive therapy during and after the pregnancy, her medical aid *might* recover the costs. This is also dependent on the legal arrangement as decided between the parties and the appointed attorney.
- ✓ The prospective surrogate needs to consent to her information being shared with the intended parents, doctors and lawyer/s involved.
- ✓ The cost of the sessions will be settled in full after each session regardless of the outcome of the recommendations.
- ✓ The balance for the report will be paid for when the report is collected.
- ✓ Should the surrogate be deemed unsuccessful in her assessment, undersigned will still be paid the required amount. Undersigned will endeavour to establish the suitability of the surrogate within the first session, but may require both sessions with the surrogate to establish this. Before compiling the report (in the case of a surrogate deemed unsuitable), undersigned will contact the IP's and the IP's must decide whether a report is required or not. Usually a report is not then required and payment for this is avoided. The payment then only consists of the two assessment sessions

Should you require further information, please contact Kim at (011) 4632244.

ADDENDUM 1

Measuring Psychological Adjustment and Coping⁽¹⁾

There has been some critique about using standardized tests amongst colleagues which were transparent in terms of what they were measuring as potential surrogates might try to present as more positive in their self-assessment for a number of reasons. They might be desperate to do the surrogacy or they might have a personality type which wants to project a positive impression. Even though certain tests may have good reliability and validity measures, one does rely on honesty and transparency on the part of the surrogate. For this reason, a lot of the assessment of the potential surrogate is based on clinical impressions and the interaction between the therapist and the surrogate, and collateral from others (if available). However, undersigned has introduced psychometric tests to assist in assessing psychological adjustment and coping, of which some of the measures, are not as obvious in what they are assessing, thus implying that it is more difficult for the respondent to present as desirable⁽²⁾.

¹ This is gained primarily via clinical impressions as well as questions and psychometric tests aimed at establishing certain measures of psychological adjustment.

² In psychometric terms, this refers to the need to present as more positive and appealing than one actually is.