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COUNSELING TOPICS FOR PATIENTS CONSIDERING THIRD-PARTY REPRODUCTION (Egg and/or Sperm Donation)

Third-party reproduction is a wonderful family-building option for many people. The decision to consider this option is often filled with many questions about donor selection, how to handle psychological issues regarding disclosure, confidentiality, and sharing this information with the child, family, and friends.

Because this is not strictly a medical decision, many couples and individuals greatly benefit from a counseling consultation with an experienced counselor in reproductive medicine. In addition, the *American Society for Reproductive Medicine* (ASRM) recommends all those interested in pursuing third-party reproduction have a supportive counseling consultation prior to beginning this family-building option.

Paula Acker, LCSW, is a member of the ASRM and has been a professional Licensed Clinical Social Worker and therapist for over 17 years. She can offer support, education, guidance, and resources about the following topics:

- Readiness to build a family through egg/sperm donation
- Grieving for the biological child (not passing on family traits and medical history, etc.)
- Psychological preparation for third-party reproduction
- Important considerations for donor selection
- Decisions about anonymous donors versus known donors
- What are information release and identity release donors and what is right for you?
- Stress management strategies for coping while trying to become pregnant
- How to reduce anxiety about treatment options
- Secrecy/confidentiality/openness – decisions patients make about who, how, when, and what to tell in regard to third-party reproduction
- What we have learned from other families formed through egg or sperm donation
- Explaining third-party reproduction to your child (what children understand at different developmental ages and stages)
- What children ask their parents about the donor
- Issues in being the biological, not genetic, mother (egg donation)
- Issues in being the psychological, not genetic, father (sperm donation)
- Differences and similarities in parenting for the non-genetic parent
- Gaining support from family, friends, co-workers, and other families formed through third-party reproduction
- Supportive articles, books, support groups, and websites
- Support for same-sex families and referral resources to legally adopt for the co-parent
- Support for single parents and support organizations