

COLAGE

DONOR CONCEIVED

**A Guide for People Who Have
LGBTQ+ Parents and Were Born
via Donor Conception and/or
Surrogacy**

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Note to Parents: *This guide will be most accessible for people in middle school or older. If your child is younger, we encourage you to read through the guide and provide the information to your child in age-appropriate ways or read the content together so that you can help with any harder vocabulary and answer questions. The [Queerspawn Resource Project](#) has many resources for queerspawn of all ages.*

Who Is This Guide For?

This guide was created primarily as a resource for all people born to one or more LGBTQ+ parent, conceived using a sperm donor, egg donor, and/or a surrogate. This guide is intended for both youth and adults with some chapters applying more than others depending on where you are in your own journey. Through this guide, we use the acronym “DCP” for “donor conceived person/people” very frequently when sharing the experience of our community members. Given the intended audience for this guide, every time “DCP” is used it is also referencing someone who has LGBTQ+ parent(s), unless otherwise specified. This is an important clarification, because although we acknowledge there are many DCP born to straight parents, the experiences of DCP with LGBTQ+ parents are unique and present specific challenges and joys. We recognize that DCP with straight parents may not agree with or understand our perspectives on these issues – this guide is for us, by us.

This guide focuses mainly on the experience of donor conception, so people born through assisted reproduction without using a donor may not find this guide as applicable to their experiences.

While everyone’s experience is certainly unique, there are often common threads that connect us all. Beyond having different kinds of families, we are also individuals who react in varying ways to similar situations. Because we are all different, some of the sections and perspectives in this guide will resonate with you, while others may not. There is no right or wrong way to feel about these topics. Hopefully you will be able to relate to these perspectives and stories and take comfort in the fact that you are not alone in your experience. When reading this guide, feel free to skip the sections that do not apply to your family.

This guide is not geared towards parents, but can be used as a resource for parents who want to understand their youth’s perspectives. By nature of the topic, this resource will outline details about human reproduction. The final chapter of this guide includes sections with advice for prospective and current parents, teachers, school administrators and people working in schools, and medical service providers, plus a legal resource guide.

This resource has been adapted and updated from the 2010 COLAGE Donor Insemination Guide

created by [Jeff DeGroot](#), and the authors are grateful for his pioneering efforts to create a guide by and for DCP with LGBTQ+ parents.

A Note on Terminology and Inclusion

As we updated this guide in 2022, it became clear that there were many different ways we could approach it, especially in terms of which terminology to use and which experiences to include. We decided for the purposes of this guide to use the terms “donor conceived” and “donor conception” and primarily focus on the experience of DCP who were born using egg or sperm donation. Much of this guide focuses on the experience of having someone who is genetically related to you but is not your legal parent, using the terms egg donor and sperm donor. We also touch on experiences of having a gestational surrogate who is not your egg donor.

The original guide used the terms “donor insemination” and “DI COLAGEr” and focused only on DCP born via sperm donation. We considered using the umbrella terms “Assisted Reproduction” and “Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART)”, but we found that to be too broad for the purposes of this guide. For example, if your parent(s) used IVF but did not use a donor, this guide would likely not be relevant to you.

We worked to create an inclusive guide and welcome suggestions for improving future editions. We acknowledge that this guide may include more stories and anecdotes from DCP born via sperm donor conception in part because many came from the original 2010 guide. Additionally, we recognize that language use around gender has come a long way since 2010, however we chose to keep in valuable perspectives of DCP quoted in the original guide even when the language used does not reflect the language currently endorsed by COLAGE.

We would like to include as many diverse perspectives as possible in this guide and future publications, so please reach out to COLAGE at info@colage.org if you have additional stories to share, especially if you were born through egg donation and/or gestational surrogacy.

And if you are interested in sharing your voice around the policy changes occurring for DCP, please email us at info@colage.org.

Glossary of Terms

In this section, we will define commonly used terms in this guide. Even if you are already familiar with these words, it is a good idea to make sure you know how they are being used in this resource. Some words are used differently over time or may mean different things to you and the authors of this guide.

Assisted Reproduction: A process by which a person is born through donor insemination, egg donation, surrogacy, In vitro fertilization (IVF), and/or other reproductive technologies.

Artificial Insemination: Medical term for the introduction of semen into the cervical opening or uterus using assistance from reproductive technology. More commonly in medical settings, the procedure is noted, “donor conception” or “in vitro fertilization” or “intrauterine insemination”. Some queerspawns take issue with this term because of the implications of the word “artificial.” Some people are now using the term “Alternative Insemination” or “Assisted Insemination”.

Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART): An umbrella term used to describe all methods of fertility treatments that handle eggs or embryos specifically. This term does not apply to fertility treatments that only handle sperm.

COLAGE: An organization that unites people with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer parents or caregivers into a network of peers and supports them as they nurture and empower each other to be skilled, self-confident, and just leaders in our collective communities.

COLAGER: A person who has or had a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer parent/caregiver. See also “Queerspawn.”

Bothie: A term used to refer to a person who has two LGBTQ+ parents who co-parent and/or share custody but are not partners or spouses with each other. An example of this is someone who has at least one lesbian mother and one gay father for parents.

Come Out: This refers to the process of an LGBTQ+ person disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity to another person or people. Can also refer to a person with LGBTQ+ parents disclosing the fact that they have LGBTQ+ parents to another person or people.

Outed (to be outed): This refers to the process of a person disclosing the LGBTQ+ identity of someone else. This term is most commonly used when this process takes place without the consent of the LGBTQ+ person. This experience can also happen to people who have LGBTQ+ parent about the fact that they have LGBTQ+ parents.

Donor: A person who donates gamete(s) to help another person have children. Also referred to as “Gamete Provider.”

Anonymous Donor: A person who donated their gamete with the understanding of remaining unknown by potential offspring, and/or the parent(s) conceiving via donation.

Known Donor: A person whose identity is known to the people who were created through their donation, and/or the parent(s) conceiving via donation.

Open Identity Donor: A person who donated their gamete knowing that their identity and/or contact information may be released upon request when the donor-conceived individuals turn 18 years old. Details about information released may change from program to program. Alternate terms for this kind of donor include: “open ID,” “identity release donor” and “willing-to-be-known donor.”

Donor Conceived Person (DCP): A person who was conceived via donor conception. In this guide, every time “DCP” is used, it is also referring to someone who has LGBTQ+ parents, unless otherwise specified.

Donor Conception: The process by which a person becomes pregnant using sperm or egg or both donated by another person/people.

Donor Insemination: The process through which donated sperm is placed inside a person with a uterus to achieve a pregnancy. Sometimes abbreviated to “DI.”

Egg Donation: The process by which a person donates their egg(s) to another person so they can conceive.

Sperm Donation: The process by which a person gives their sperm to another person so they can conceive.

Donor Siblings: People who are biologically related to one another by sharing genetic material via the egg/sperm donor, in other words, having the same egg and/or sperm donor. See also “Half-Siblings.”

Gamete: A mature reproductive cell, a sperm or an egg, that combines with another mature reproductive cell as one of the first steps to starting a pregnancy.

Egg: Reproductive cell found in the ovaries of a person. (One half of the gametes needed to start a pregnancy).

Sperm: Reproductive cell found in the testicles of a person. (One half of the gametes needed to start a pregnancy).

Half-Siblings: People who are related through only one biological parent.

Intrauterine Insemination (IUI): Process when sperm that have been washed and concentrated are placed directly in a uterus around the time the ovary releases one or more eggs to be fertilized.

In Vitro Fertilization (IVF): Process which involves retrieving egg(s) and combining with sperm for fertilization outside of the body in a medical facility/lab and then implanted into a uterus.

Surrogacy: The process through which a person becomes pregnant to help another person have children.

Gestational Surrogacy: The process through which a person becomes pregnant using someone else's egg to help another person have children.

Surrogate: A person who becomes pregnant to help another person have children.

Surro Baby: A person born through surrogacy.

Queerspawn: A person who has or had a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer parent/caregiver. The term "queerspawn" was coined in 1995 by COLAGEr, Stefan Lynch and is often used to articulate one's connection to queer community and claim space in it. See also "COLAGEr."

Test Tube Baby: Refers to a person conceived through assisted reproductive technologies (ART), such as donor insemination, egg donation or IVF. Some people do not like this word and find it offensive, while others have reclaimed it and identify this way.

Chapter 2: I Know My Donor

This chapter focuses on the experience of having an egg or sperm donor whom you are able to contact. Some of the advice and experiences in this chapter may be relevant to the experience of having a gestational surrogate. (For more information specifically about the experience of having a gestational surrogate, see [Chapter 4: I Was Born through Gestational Surrogacy](#) and [For People with a Gestational Surrogate](#) in Chapter 5).

Known Donors

A known donor is a donor with whom you are able to have contact. Relationships with known donors can be very different depending on your family situation. Some people with known donors have a donor who co-parents with another parent or parents. Some people may have a known donor that does not play the role of a parent or caregiver, but may play another role in a person's life, such as that of a close family friend or non-parent relative such as an aunt or uncle. Other people have a known donor who they have only met once or twice in their lives. For a variety of reasons people choose to use a known donor to conceive a child, or a donor chooses to donate under these circumstances. Because the circumstances are different from person-to-person, or family-to-family, DCP will have varied experiences with having a known donor.

Many people with known donors are enthusiastic about their family situation and their relationship they have with their donor. Hannah, an 18-year-old DCP from Maine, embraces having a known donor. She explains,

"I think it is... wonderful for a child to be able to see where half of their genes come from and know that it was really a team effort to bring them into the world. I love having a non-traditional family. It has also taught me that biology is not the only thing that makes a family. I love my dad and my dad loves me, but we are VERY different people."

Many people have similar experiences to Hannah's and have established a solid relationship with their donor, but like any relationship, this can take time and be a process as you grow up. Because all known donor relationships are different, it is hard to say what will be right for you.

Many people with known donors stress that it is important not to let outside forces influence the relationship you want or do not want with your donor, and to not automatically view this person as a parent if that is not how you feel about them. One DCP advises,

"I think it's important to really be honest with yourself about your feelings and expectations. Try not to let the expectations and assumptions that others have for you overrule your own feelings."

Rachel, a 24-year-old living in Philadelphia, agrees that it is important not to let outside

influences pressure you and determine the relationship you want on your own. She says:

"Don't try to place a structure for dad/mom you learn in society - on TV, etc. - onto your relationship with your donor. Take the relationship for what it is and nurture it as you become an adult. When you're a kid, your parents sort of decide when you and your donor will spend time, but when you get older you can have a say in it."

There can be bumps along the way when establishing a relationship with your donor. Sometimes you may want more from the relationship, and other times you may want space from your donor. It is also important to respect boundaries of the donor. One DCP from New York faced this kind of situation and says, *"I grew up having certain expectations of what roles my dad(s) would play in my life, and when they didn't fulfill those expectations, I was hurt."*

Maddy, who is 17 and has a known donor, says she had a similar experience.

"My donor doesn't seem to be particularly into the whole father thing with me, and it caused me quite a bit of pain trying to get him to be," she states. She advises that other people in similar situations should realize that, "You don't have to make them [your donor] into a father, just because that's what they are biologically."

She goes on to add that people should not force a relationship and let it "take its own form."

Other people may find that they do not want to be as close with their donor as others in society may expect them to want to be. This can be harder when you are younger and do not have as much say in who you spend time with, but as you grow older it is good to remember that you can speak up and have a say about the relationship. As a DCP from California advises,

"Feel free to have full control over the kind of relationship that you want to have with your donor. If you're not interested in having a full relationship, then don't. You have control over that relationship, so don't let others dictate it for you."

Known Donors Who Have Become Estranged from the Family

Sometimes known donors become estranged from the family and are no longer able to be contacted. Or, due to disagreements between donors and family members, you are still able to contact your donor, but members of your family do not want you speaking with them. If you are in this kind of situation, you may be curious about your origins, as it is part of the human experience. Remember that you have the ability to set boundaries and decide how you feel about your donor. It may be helpful to talk about your experience with trusted adults, family members, or friends who can help you work through the situation.

Positive Donor Experiences

Despite the sometimes challenging task of defining the relationship with your known donor, many

people have come to cherish the bonds they are able to build. For one DCP from Pennsylvania, it was the chance to meet her donor's parents and understand more about her heritage that meant the most to her.

"I...really like knowing my donor's parents because they are Holocaust survivors who have given me a good perspective on life and my cultural heritage and made me aware of how much of my Eastern European ancestry is missing (on my moms' sides too)."

For another DCP from Massachusetts, having his donor and his donor's partner be part of his family has been a wonderful experience. He says, "It's great to have a massive extended family and know people! I have it, and it ROCKS!!!!".

Chapter 3: I Don't Know My Donor

This chapter focuses on the experience of having an egg or sperm donor whom you do not know. Some of the advice and experiences in this chapter may be relevant to the experience of having a gestational surrogate. (For more information specifically about the experience of having a gestational surrogate, see [Chapter 4: I Was Born Through Gestational Surrogacy](#) and [For People with a Gestational Surrogate](#) in Chapter 5).

Anonymous Donors

An anonymous donor is a person who donated their gamete (sperm or egg) with the understanding of remaining unknown by potential offspring. For many people conceived in the 1970's through 1990's, and even into the 2000's, anonymous donation was the only option for people or families working through a bank.

Many different families use anonymous donors, and choose this option for a variety of reasons. Some anonymous donors are found through a sperm or egg bank, and others may be known to parents but not to the children. This last scenario is the case for a teenager from Michigan who states, *"I personally have not been in contact with my donor, but I know my mom was once or twice when I was younger. However, I do not know whether they are still in contact."*

Depending on whether or not your parent(s) used a gamete bank and what information was released, you may have information about your donor. The information that many gamete banks release is usually confined to a donor's family medical history and physical characteristics, such as height, weight, eye color, educational/professional history, a description of their personal interests, and explanation of ancestry. Currently, many banks offer voice recordings from the donor, written statements, baby or childhood photos and a variety of other materials. One DCP in her late-30's from New York shared,

"When I was conceived in the '80's my parents were given very little information from the sperm bank, and it was all handled via our family doctor. My parents never actually had contact with the bank. But by the '90's, when my brother was conceived, there was much more information available to my parents, and the bank was much more focused on providing good service to families. Although my brother and I are not interested in having a relationship with our donors, having information on our ancestry, medical history and other details is useful - so much in our society places a focus on the biological or genetic aspects of one's identity. Identity is so much more than that, but it is a piece and I'm grateful for the information I have on my donor, regardless of wanting a relationship."

Open Identity (Open ID) Donors

An open identity donor is a gamete provider who donated their gamete with the knowledge

that their identity and/or contact information can be released at age 18 to the DCP that their donation created. Alternate terms for this kind of donor include *identity release donor* and *willing-to-be-known donor*.

As with anonymous donors, the amount of information you can learn about the gamete provider varies depending on the state law or gamete bank policies of where the gamete came from.

Perspectives of DCP: Varied Levels of Curiosity About Their Donors

Each person born using a donor has varying degrees of curiosity about their donor, and that curiosity can change throughout one's life. Some people are very interested in learning more about their donor, and others aren't too curious about it. There is no right or wrong way to feel about your donor.

Many DCP are content with their families and just want to learn more about the person who helped create them. *"Although I am curious about the donor that my parents used, I don't feel as if my life is incomplete and unhappy because I don't have more information about him,"* says Morgan, a 24-year-old from California.

A 14-year-old DCP from Connecticut shares her similar feelings about her donor, stating,

"I love my family more than anything else, but I still want to know what the donor looks like, if my brother and I look like him, if we have any of the same mannerisms, or anything like that."

On the other hand, many DCP have only a moderate interest in learning more about their donors. *"I don't know who my donor is, and while I have been curious at times, it isn't something of any importance to me or my family,"* says a 14-year-old DCP.

One 18-year-old DCP echoes these thoughts, stating, *"I mean, if I got to find out, it would be interesting, but I'm not going to go out of my way to look."*

While a majority of people express some interest in their donors, others say they have none. One 11-year-old says simply that he is not curious because, *"I don't know him, and I like my parents."*

Still, other DCP can be so intensely curious about their donor that they feel a sense of loss from not knowing them. One 20-year-old from California says the hardest part about being a DCP is *"the lack of knowledge I have about my donor."* One parent comments that her daughter feels "anger" and "grief" about not having her donor in her life.

If you are feeling anger or other intense feelings, it is important to express your feelings to someone who is sympathetic and can be understanding and supportive, including other DCP. (See [Talking With Your Parent\(s\) About Your Donor](#) for ideas on how to approach this topic with your parent(s).)

As Emily, a 20-year-old from Massachusetts who has met her open identity donor explains, *"I was extremely curious to know who my donor was, why they had chosen to be a donor, and their medical history. Finding out who he was had been on my mind for years."*

Many people with open identity donors embrace having the opportunity to obtain their donor's contact information when they are 18. A 12-year-old DCP from New York states, *"When I am 18 I will try to locate my donor. I want to know who my donor is because I think I deserve to know who my biological other half is."*

Another person with an open identity donor explains that it is exciting to wait to meet your donor. He says,

"It's pretty cool to not know who your dad/mom is. You have to wait and see. It's like a checklist. Each year, as you get older, you get to cross off a year. And before you know it, you'll be 18 years old, and get to meet your donor."

However, there are people who have open identity donors who would rather not meet them. One DCP who has decided not to meet her open identity donor explains her decision by stating,

"Though I would love to see a picture of him just to see the ways in which I am like him, I know that he has not played an important role in my life. I suppose I feel as though seeking him out might bring back old insecurities and emotions that I have worked hard to overcome."

It is important to keep in mind that despite a gamete bank's best efforts, it is not always possible to meet your donor or have other communication with them. For open identity donors, banks often do not guarantee that you can meet your donor, but will release their identity or contact information to you. Donors have agency as well, and may or may not decide to establish a relationship with a DCP after being contacted via information shared from an Open ID scenario or being located through other means, such as an ancestry or genealogy service.

There is no right or wrong way to feel about not knowing the identity of your donor. For some, it can be a positive or neutral experience. But others struggle with not knowing about their donor. If this is how you feel, know that you are not alone, and many DCP have been in your position. These are some perspectives that may be helpful to you if you are struggling.

Some older DCP realize that their initial desires to know their donors were caused by other people telling them they should have one mother and one father. As Sierra, a 19-year-old DCP from Iowa, explains, *"My discomfort in not knowing my donor came from my peers who did not understand how I could not know my father."* She adds, *"If I had known him, it may have been easier to talk about my family but I know it would have created a strange dynamic within my family....In retrospect I am happy he was not a part of my life,"* she concludes. Another adult DCP shares,

"When I was younger, my peers or teachers tried to force me to believe that my 'family' were those with whom I was biologically related. But as a person with lesbian moms, I knew very well that in my family, my biological connection to my parents was not the most important factor to me. Being told that I should want to know my donor, establish a relationship, and that I was missing out on something was very hurtful and confusing to me as a young person. Having an LGBTQ+ family requires the ability to conceive of family outside of heteronormative or "traditional" models. I don't feel I'm missing anything at all, or missing out on a relationship - I have two strong and loving parents in my life already."

Others focus on what they have and embrace the mystery that is part of their identity. One DCP offers some advice: *"Try to focus on what you have rather than what you don't have."* Aaron, a 29-year-old college professor from California, goes farther by stating,

"My advice [for people with anonymous donors] would be to embrace not knowing your donor. As a child, I wanted to know more about my donor, but as I grew up I found it great to have this big question mark on that side of my biological family tree. The mystery was interesting and felt unique." He goes on to say that while he might have avoided *"some uncertainty as a child, and perhaps some moments of pain"* if he had known his donor, he would be a *"different person"* and *"I have to say that I like who I am now."*

Talking With Your Parent(s) About Your Donor

In some families, talking about your donor is commonplace and easy. In other cases, it may be awkward or painful. Most of the time, talking to your parent(s) is a good idea and can be very helpful.

No matter your situation, the relationship—or lack of relationship—you have with your donor has been affected in some way by decisions your parent(s) have made. Before you bring up these topics with your parent(s), you may want to take some time to reflect on your own feelings and read through this whole guide. It can be helpful to approach these conversations with curiosity. You can start with asking your parent(s) what they know about your donor, or how they made the decision to use a donor to have you.

Remember that you don't have to agree with their choices. If there is tension or disagreement, you may want to talk about the situation with another trusted family member or friend.

For additional help, there is an information sheet at the back of this guide for parents on how to talk to their children about their donor. You may want to read this guide and see if it would be helpful for your parent(s) to read it before you have a conversation about your donor. (See [Advice for Prospective and Current Parents.](#))

Potential Goals For Talking with Your Parent(s) about Your Donor

Make the topic of your donor more comfortable for your family

It is not up to you to make this a comfortable topic – your parent(s) should help you by talking about your donor– but if you still believe this is an awkward topic, bringing it up for discussion can make it more comfortable.

Luckily, for many DCP, talking with their family about their donor is already comfortable. The majority of respondents from the survey for the original guide say they are able to speak openly with their parents about their donor and any curiosities they might have about them. A 15-year-old from Colorado explains that her family is *“very open... They are happy to talk to me, I’ve looked at [my donor’s] file several times with my moms there,”* she adds.

Many parents also agree that they want a family environment where a donor can be discussed openly. One parent whose child has an open-identity donor states, *“We want him (our son) to be able to connect with the other half of his gene pool, as well as any half siblings. We feel it only broadens his family, and increases his opportunities to expand his circle of friends.”* Another parent adds that her daughter *“needs to know that there is a generous man who donated his sperm so we could make a family.”*

In some family situations, however, the topic of your donor can be awkward to discuss with your parent(s). *“It feels uncomfortable to talk about, but I could if I wanted to,”* says one DCP with an open-identity donor. *“It’s more my own feeling of awkwardness talking about my donor than my parents’ unwillingness to,”* she adds. Another DCP with a known donor agrees, saying, *“My moms don’t mind my brother or me asking questions, I just sometimes feel awkward asking about the donor.”*

Your parent(s) also might not be comfortable with the topic, making it difficult to begin a discussion. A DCP from Texas with an anonymous donor says that it can be *“uncomfortable”* to bring up the subject with her mom. She explains, *“My mom always says that I can ask but when I do it seems like she finds a way to change the subject or just doesn’t have the information.”* Another person from Washington, DC with an anonymous donor says that it is hard to talk about her donor with her mother and adds simply, *“My mom does not feel comfortable with this subject.”*

Sometimes it can be difficult to discuss your donor with a parent who is not biologically related to you. Some DCP have expressed difficulty with discussing their genetic origins with a parent who is not biologically related to them. A DCP explains that it's awkward to talk with her non-biological mom because she has felt that a donor could supplant her as a parent. *"My family is very open to talking," she says, "but it is certainly more uncomfortable talking about my donor with my non-biological mom who might feel like the donor would replace her as my second parent."* This person goes on to say that she has worked with her non-biological mom to overcome these feelings. *"We have talked about it and it is understood that [my non-biological mom] will always be my other parent, and meeting my donor would never change that,"* she states.

This can be a difficult process at first, but many DCP say that after talking with their parents several times the topic gets easier. *"My moms have been very supportive about me finding out the identity of my donor and meeting him. It is a delicate topic but as time goes on it gets more and more comfortable,"* states a DCP with an open identity donor.

Gain more information about your donor

Your parent(s) may have additional informational materials, records they filled out or letters they wrote. The process of conception and selecting a donor is different in each family, and there may be some materials of interest to a DCP that others may not consider. The materials also might be able to tell you the characteristics your donor has that were factors in your parent(s) selection of them as a donor.

Understand why your parent(s) chose your donor

Understanding your parent(s)' considerations and reasoning can provide you with more information about your origins and help deepen your relationship or understanding with your parent(s). These are some potential reasons for why parents choose to use either an anonymous or an open identity donor:

- Legal protections: To reduce likelihood that the donor would be able to fight for parental custody.
- Maintain family boundaries: To ensure that the donor does not form a parental relationship with the DCP.
- Protect their child: To make sure their child does not have to deal with negative outcomes that could happen if they reach out to their donor and it doesn't go well
- Other donor criteria are more important: Other elements of donors' identities may have been more important when choosing a donor (such as finding a donor who looks like

the non-biological parent, or selecting a donor with the same blood type), so parents sometimes compromise and choose an anonymous donor even if they would prefer an open identity donor.

You do not have to agree with your parent's decisions. Even if you understand why an anonymous or open identity donor was chosen, that does not mean you have to be okay with having one. However, it might help to talk with your parent(s) about why they chose an anonymous or open identity donor so you can better understand your origins.

Share your feelings about your donor

Often it can feel good to express your feelings to a person you trust. Who in your life can you talk to about your feelings? Some ideas are: your parent(s), other family members like siblings, aunts, or uncles, teachers, coaches, other close friends or family members who you trust. You can also connect with other DCP who have LGBTQ+ parents through COLAGE, through our [Connect](#) page on our website, which will most likely allow you to find people who resonate with your experience.

Trying to locate your donor

While it may not be possible to locate your donor, you may want to try, and talking with your parent(s) about this interest can be a good first step.

A DCP from Massachusetts says that she was concerned that when she told her parents she wanted to meet her donor that they would think it was because she was not happy with her family. *"I wanted to make sure they did not get offended and think that there was something missing in my relationship with them,"* she says.

Having the support of your parent(s) can be important when going through the process of meeting your donor. *"I would feel uncomfortable being curious about my donor and searching him out if my mother had not been supportive of such an idea,"* says a 16-year-old DCP from Colorado. It is natural to have these feelings of curiosity, and having such emotions in no way means you have a poor relationship with your parent(s). Additionally, if you are able, it might be a good idea to express to your parent(s) why you want to contact your donor, but it is okay if you are not able to state why you want to meet this person.

As you go through the process of talking with your parent(s) about searching for or meeting your donor, it is good to get an idea of what concerns they might have about meeting your donor, too. However, when deciding whether or not to contact your donor, remember that it is not your

responsibility to protect your parent(s). If you are set on meeting your donor, you can talk with your parent(s) about their concerns, but their feelings are theirs alone - any potentially negative feelings or feelings of concern that your parent(s) hold do not mean you are doing the wrong thing by trying to contact your donor. Most parents are supportive of their children meeting their donor, but some parents who took the survey for the original guide did mention several fears they had about that possibility.

As some DCP fear, there are parents who are concerned that when their child meets their donor, their child will see their donor as a parent and feel differently about their parent(s). Parents also mention that they are concerned their children may be displeased with being raised by LGBTQ+ parents and look to their donor to function as a "normal" or heterosexual parent. The last main concern some parents expressed was a fear that their child's donor would not be LGBTQ+ friendly. *"I do worry that the donor won't be accepting of our family,"* says a parent from New York. Another parent adds, *"I hope [the donor] is okay with our family when/if our child contacts him...for [our daughter's] sake."*

A DCP from Maryland also raises concerns about her donor's potential views,

"A part of why I am choosing not to try to contact my donor is that I am concerned that they would not be supportive of the fact that I have queer parents. The risks of my donor being bigoted outweigh the potential benefits of finding them. For now, I am focusing on cultivating relationships with half siblings who are interested in getting to know me."

Again, different parents are going to have varying feelings about their child meeting their donor. When talking with your parent(s), you don't need to have all the answers. You may not know what kind of relationship you want with this person or exactly why you want to meet them. You also may share some of your parent(s)' fears that your donor may not be LGBTQ+ friendly. This is okay, and you should not be pressured into reassuring people around you that you know exactly how meeting your donor is going to go.

Deciding If You Want To Find the Identity of Your Donor

Making the decision to look for more information about your donor is an important decision that you get to make. While you can't know for sure how difficult or possible it will be to locate a donor or find more information about them, the first step is deciding if you want to. There isn't a right or wrong choice.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- How curious am I right now about who my donor is? What is driving my curiosity?
- What would I like to learn about them (such as their medical history, what they look like, what kind of a person they are, what their ancestry is)?

- What are some of the risks in searching for them?
- What are my hopes and expectations of the donor? Am I prepared for them to meet, exceed or not meet these expectations?
- How will I deal with any negative feelings that come up in this process?
- Do I have a support system around to help me?
- Do I have the time to do research?
- Do I feel emotionally prepared for what might come up?
- How might this process impact my family? My parents? If you have siblings with the same or different donors, how do they feel about this decision?

While it is your decision to make, it can be helpful to talk through these and other questions with your parent(s) or other trusted people in your life. But remember that it is okay if others don't agree with your decision.

Some DCP are interested in learning more about their donor for medical reasons. They may wonder if their medical conditions were passed down from their donors. One adult DCP says she has Crohn's Disease, and, while the donor didn't indicate a history of this condition, she still "wonders" if she inherited the disease from them. These curiosities can also center around what conditions might be passed down to potential children. Another DCP explains her curiosity, saying, *"My little sister has mental illnesses and I've gone through periods of depression and I would like to know whether or not they were genetic and if I could possibly pass them on to my future kids."* Kinsey, a 13-year-old from Kentucky, explains how she *"suffered from many auto-immune issues...and hyper-thyroidism"* but was never able to contact her donor to see if they had a genetic condition that would explain her disease.

A genetic counselor, a person who specializes in determining what traits people can pass on, is a resource you may want to access if you are in a similar situation. Medical genetic testing is a resource that is covered by most insurance companies, and is a reliable way to find out more information about one's medical profile that may or may not have been shared on a donor profile, and may include information that a donor may not even know themselves. Medical genetic testing is different than the genealogy services provided by "DNA" testing websites, as medical genetic testing or genome sequencing involves examining your DNA to identify genetic variants that may be related to your health.

If you suffer from a serious medical condition that you believe might be linked to your donor, contacting the gamete bank your parent(s) used, might be helpful for you and others. First of all, most gamete banks keep files on every person who has been born through a specific donor. This means that they can most likely inform you if other people with the same donor have been having the same health condition. Secondly, if the health issue is a genetic condition, the gamete bank

can evaluate the potential health risks for other DCP from the same donor. They may contact other people with the same donor so they can watch for signs of the condition you experienced. Finally, if it is an extremely serious condition the gamete bank might be able to contact the donor if this would help treat your condition.

Donor Siblings

Donor siblings (sometimes called “half siblings”) are people who are biologically related to one another by having the same donor. Many people are interested in meeting their donor siblings, sometimes even more so than meeting their donor.

“I’m really curious about half siblings. I might like more information about my donor, but I don’t want a relationship with them,” says a DCP from Chicago. *“I think it would be super cool to know that I have [donor siblings]/talk to them/meet them etc. ESPECIALLY if they were [a COLAGEr]. Because [COLAGErs] have a really high rate of being AWESOME,”* she adds. DCP often express that they want to meet their donor siblings to build relationships with new people and also discover what traits they share with these people in order to learn more about their genetic origins.

Ways To Locate Donor Siblings

If you are interested in meeting any donor siblings you may have, there are several ways to go about looking for them.

If you were born using a gamete bank, reaching out to them is a good place to start. Different banks have varying policies when it comes to releasing donor sibling information; some will not release any information, including donor sibling contact information, to minors (people under the age of 18). However, increasingly programs offer to connect parents of younger DCP as well as DCP 18+ with others who share the donor

Gamete banks keep track of gamete providers by giving them a number. If you know your donor’s number, there are ways you can search for other people with the same donor, including websites that specialize in connecting donor siblings.

You may also find genetic relatives through genealogy companies such as 23andMe and Ancestry. You can pay a fee and send off a sample to these companies and this will allow you to see the profiles of any other individuals who have used the same service that you may be related to in some way. There are potential privacy and security concerns with these companies, and you likely need to be 18 or have your parent’s permission to participate, but for some, this is an easy way to find genetic relatives. Using this option may mean identifying genetic relatives who do not know they were donor conceived or do not know their relative was a donor.

Connecting with Donor Siblings

If you do identify donor siblings and decide to reach out to them, there are many questions to keep in mind. First, how do you want to interact with them? Donor siblings may be viewed in a number of ways: as strangers, acquaintances, potential new friends, new family members, or anything in between.

"I'd be curious to see if I have any half siblings, but they wouldn't be my sisters or brothers, they'd just be someone else with the same biological father as me," says a DCP from Connecticut. Another DCP, who is about to meet his donor siblings, sees his donor siblings as "cousins." No matter what kind of relationship you are looking for, be clear about your expectations with your donor siblings.

Many DCP who have met donor siblings have had extremely positive experiences bringing these new people into their lives and in some cases expanding their families. For some people, meeting their donor siblings is about finding a new friend they can keep in touch with over the internet. *"The two families we met were very kind and they were supportive of my parents LGBTQ status. It was a wonderful experience to meet my half sibling and I am still in touch with them today through email, letters and Facebook,"* writes a 14-year-old DCP. Other times, donor siblings can become additions to your family. *"I only regret not being able to meet my sisters sooner,"* says one college student. *"With siblings I don't believe there is pressure to bond, and I would have loved to know them sooner because they are both amazing people who I am very close with now,"* she adds.

It is important to keep in mind that DCP have a variety of experiences that can shape how they view their donor and donor siblings. Unfortunately, many DCP, often those without LGBTQ+ parents, were not told the truth about being donor conceived. Having been lied to by their parents may cause negative emotions like anger and may impact one's interest in connecting with donor siblings. Remember to not take it personally if your donor siblings do not want to connect with you. Each person has the agency and ability to decide what is right for them. Working to get prepared about all the potential outcomes, is an important step before moving toward locating or identifying donor siblings.

How To Find Out Who Your Donor Is

The difficulty level of finding your donor depends on many factors. If you haven't already talked to your parent(s) about your donor, now would be a good time. The easiest place to start is with any information your parent(s) have. Do they have paperwork?

If your parent(s) used a gamete bank to have you, you can try contacting them. While they most likely won't be allowed to give you your donor's contact information (unless they are an open identity donor and you are of age), they may be able to provide you with information such as the

donor number assigned. You may be able to use that donor number to find more information or other people who share your donor (often known as “donor siblings” or “half siblings”).

As mentioned in the Donor Sibling section, it has become more possible to find donors through genetic testing companies such as 23andMe and Ancestry. You can pay a fee and send off your DNA to these companies and they will allow you to see your genetic relatives who have also sent in their DNA. There are potential privacy and security concerns with these companies, and you likely need to be 18 or have your parent’s permission to participate, but for some, this is an easy way to find genetic relatives.

Deciding If You Want to Contact or Meet Your Donor

If you do find your donor, the next decision is whether or not you want to reach out to them. Just because you found out who they are does not mean you need to try to contact them. Reaching out to them is a big step. And if you are able to contact them, more questions emerge: Do you want to meet them? Do you want to develop a relationship with them? Again, it can be helpful to think through the options yourself and talk about it with trusted family and friends.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- What are some reasons why it is a good idea to contact my donor? What is the best case scenario?
- Why might it be a bad idea? What is the worst case scenario? (For example, what if they never respond? Or if they don’t have any interest in interacting with me? Or if they are no longer alive? Or if they have different views and priorities?)
- Do I feel emotionally prepared for and have support in case things don’t go well?
- What are my expectations in reaching out?

As one DCP with an open identity donor puts it, the hardest part about having an open identity donor is, *“Talking about my decision to meet or not meet my donor.”* As DCP who have gone through the process of meeting their open identity donors stress, make sure you personally evaluate if it is the right time for you to contact your donor.

As Jesse, a 24-year-old living in New York advises, *“Talk about the situation with all of your friends and your parents and siblings. It’s an intense experience if nothing else, and it’s just good to check in with your support system to make sure you know how you’re feeling about the whole thing.”*

Marcus, who has also met his donor, agrees, and stresses that the decision should be a personal one. He states: *“Let expectations go, and if you are interested in meeting your donor, wait for the right moment for YOU. Let the process be about you, and getting more information for yourself, as you want it.”*

Despite the challenges, many families have had very positive experiences with meeting an open identity donor. In fact, parents sometimes build relationships with their child's donors. *"My mom is very close with both my biological father and his partner. She has always been accepting of my interest and loves that we have made contact with my donor,"* says a DCP from Colorado. Another DCP says that the entire experience of being raised in an LGBTQ+ family and then later having the opportunity to meet her donor and donor siblings has been fantastic. *"I have had a really positive experience growing up in my family and getting to meet my donor and my half sisters!"* she states.

If you are considering contacting your donor, you may have thought about what this person will look like or what kind of personality they might have. While many donors will fit their description as listed on any donor information provided to your parent(s), it is best to not be too set on what you expect the person to be like.

As one DCP simply advises, *"anticipate a surprise!"* Another person from Massachusetts, who has met her donor agrees, saying, *"Before being able to contact my donor I thought I knew he was tall, a Catholic, of German descent, and liked to run. ...In fact my donor is not German and not a runner."*

It is also common to wonder if your donor has an interest in meeting you. As one 19-year-old DCP says, *"I ... know his decision (to donate sperm) was not about me and, thus, I wonder about his own interests in potentially meeting me."*

It is impossible to know what your donor will be thinking when you decide to contact them, so it is a good idea to weigh the pros and cons.

Despite knowing the risks, many DCP decide to try contacting their donor. One DCP, who is not 18, but is set on meeting her donor says, *"I would hope that he would want to stay in touch with me and that I would make a good impression, but I would take the risk of not finding him or him not wanting to be in contact."*

For DCP considering meeting their donor, another common question is: Will my donor be LGBTQ+ friendly? Many gamete banks do inform donors that many of the people who purchase sperm and eggs are LGBTQ+ couples wanting to start a family. This means it may not come as a great surprise to your donor that you have an LGBTQ+ parent.

If you do decide to contact your donor, it is important to remember to take precautions to establish trust before sharing personal details such as your home address and full name to ensure your safety.

How To Build a Relationship with Your Donor

If you do find and meet your donor, the next question is often: what kind of relationship would you like to establish with this person? As a first step, you should think about your own answer to that question. Try to notice how you are feeling. As one 19-year-old DCP advises, *"For those who are meeting their donors when they are older, I would advise to know the parameters of what you want from the relationships beforehand."* This person says she had to go through a process of figuring out what kind of relationship she wanted as she grew up. *"Until I was about 13, I was still hoping to establish a father/daughter relationship. Now that I am older I can let the relationship develop naturally and embrace having someone new in my life,"* she says.

Trying to strike the right balance in a relationship with your donor can be tricky. As the person quoted above advises, make sure you think about what boundaries you might want in the relationship. After meeting the donor you might have a better idea of what these boundaries will be and it is important to be clear with your donor about these boundaries. One DCP from Washington D.C. who has just met his donor, describes the relationship he has set with his donor by stating, *"This person is your father, but not necessarily your dad."* While you may have considered this topic, remember that your donor and their family may feel strongly one way or the other about the relationship.

There is always a chance that your preferences will not match those of your donor's or your parent(s). Like all relationships, there is a potential for disappointment and hard feelings. It is important to have a support system in place who can help you work through any complications that come up. And remember, just because you found them and have a connection does not mean you need to continue a relationship with them if it doesn't feel right. Your feelings can change, and that is okay.

Chapter 4: I Was Born Through Gestational Surrogacy

The original guide did not include the experiences of having a gestational surrogate, and while the addition of this chapter is short, COLAGE is working toward continuing to add resources on this and other topics. You may find other parts of this guide that are written about donors may also apply to gestational surrogates. And if you are a DCP who was born through gestational surrogacy and would like to share your experience or thoughts for future updates to this guide, please be in touch!

Sometimes when talking about surrogacy, the egg donor and surrogate are the same person, but for some people born through donor conception, they have a gestational surrogate who did not contribute a gamete. This chapter focuses on relationships and talking to parents about gestational surrogates.

A gestational surrogate is a person who agrees to carry an embryo that contains none of their biological material. In this case, your relationship (if any) with your egg donor likely is not the same as with your gestational surrogate. Your surrogate may have been family, and your egg donor may be unknown. Or you could have a known egg donor and a surrogate who you do not have a relationship with at all. There are many different set-ups and possibilities. (Chapters 2 and 3 may contain advice and experiences that are relevant to your relationship with your surrogate)

For one 22-year-old COLAGEr from Massachusetts, her egg donor was family, but did not feel comfortable with carrying a pregnancy at that time. Her dads were able to find a surrogate who was willing to carry the embryo with the donor egg and her dad's sperm, but she has no relationship with the surrogate now despite being close to her egg donor. She says: *"I respect my surrogate's decision to not have a relationship with me, but I am still grateful for her willingness to carry and birth me."*

Talking to your parent(s) about your relationship with your surrogate can be equally as important as the conversation you would have about a donor (See [Talking With Your Parent\(s\) About Your Donor](#) for advice that may be relevant to your situation). While you do not share biological material, you may still decide to recognize them as someone of importance in your life and your conception story. If your surrogate was hired through an agency, your parents may not know them as well and there may be policies in a contract, much like with an anonymous sperm or egg donation, preventing you from contacting them. (See [How To Find Out Who Your Donor Is, Deciding If You Want To Contact Or Meet Your Donor](#), [How To Build a Relationship with Your Donor](#) in Chapter 3.)

For the queerspawn mentioned above, her dad knows her surrogate well, but despite that the

surrogate does not have a close relationship with her. For her it has been difficult to wrestle with, but conversations with her parents about it can help.

Chloe, an 18-year-old DCP from Florida born through gestational surrogacy has an anonymous egg donor. Chloe knows her egg donor's name and what she looks like, but says, *"I don't want to try to contact her because she gave me the gift of life, I can give her the gift of anonymity."* Chloe knows her surrogate, but hasn't ever reached out to her because *"she has her own kids and her own life,"* Chloe says, *"so I never really wanted to bother her. But, I know her kids just went to college, so eventually in my life I want to meet her. [Being born through gestational surrogacy] is definitely different for everybody."*

In summary, for some, having a gestational surrogate is a piece of their life story, while for others they are someone who was involved in their conception, but is not a part of their life. We wanted to include this chapter to recognize the role gestational surrogates play in the lives of some DCP. Conversations surrounding your gestational surrogate may be similar or different to conversations you may have about your egg donor.

Chapter 5: Talking to Others About Your Family

It is a common shared experience for COLAGErs to encounter some difficult decisions or awkward moments when discussing their family and family formation story with people outside the COLAGE and LGBTQ+ communities. While many people are kind and curious, other people may not understand or respect your family's formation story.

The most important thing to remember is that you don't need to be worried about how other people view your family. While it is natural to want to be accepted and understood by peers, sometimes people have narrow understandings of families and are not accepting.

Remember that all families are valid. There are an infinite number of ways to create a family and define what family means to you. Families created using donor conception and/or surrogacy are valid. Family is about the people who love and care for you.

The way you feel about sharing your family's story with others will likely change as you get older, have more experiences throughout your life, as your peers learn more about reproduction and as you gain more confidence in yourself.

The last section in this chapter has ideas for where you can find support if you are struggling.

Deciding How to Share About Your Family

In many situations, you get to be the one to decide if you want to share with other people about your family and/or details about your conception, and if you do, how many details you want to share. You might naturally share more personal details about your life, including your family formation story, with people who you are close to and already trust. For strangers or people you don't know very well, you might not need or want to share personal information.

It is okay to not tell everyone how your family was formed or who makes up your family. Many COLAGErs have a shared experience of feeling guilty for lying to other people about their parent(s) being LGBTQ+ because of worries or fears about discrimination or homophobia/transphobia. But you don't need to feel guilty. You are in charge of your story and how or when you share it, if at all. If you feel like it would be helpful, talking with your parent(s) about your experience is a good way to get on the same page and get their advice on sharing information about yourself, your family and your family formation.

In a school context, you can explain that *you* want to be the one who tells people you have LGBTQ+ parent(s) and that you would prefer your teachers, friends, or counselors not disclose information about your family without your explicit consent. Most parents have been through school and understand the social pressures youth can face. (See [Advice for Teachers, School](#)

[Administrators, and Others Working in Schools](#). You or your parent(s) can share this section with your teachers or school administrators to help them understand situations DCP encounter.)

Talking with Peers About Your Family Formation

Concerns with sexual terminology, misinformation about reproduction, and homophobia

For some DCP, it can be difficult to describe their family formation story because it can involve using words about sexual reproduction. Depending on the age and education of your peers, they may not understand how humans reproduce at all and have even less understanding of assisted reproduction. And some adults might be uncomfortable discussing these topics or think of them as inappropriate.

COLAGE takes a “sex-positive” approach when talking about sex and reproduction with youth. This means that COLAGE generally views sex as a healthy part of life that people should learn about in age appropriate ways. The more open people are about sex, relationships, intimacy and reproduction, the more youth and young adults can also learn about ways to be safe and make decisions that are right for them, if they decide they want to be sexually active.

But others may take a more “sex-negative” approach, and believe that *all* discussion of sexual topics for youth is inappropriate.

“Unfortunately I think that there’s been a swing towards a more sex-negative general attitude in this country, corresponding to a decrease in the level of sex ed that children have been receiving for the past 5-10 years, so I worry that people bring a certain immaturity and discomfort to the table when talking about anything related to sex, let alone something that is less common like donor insemination,” says one DCP from California.

And many DCP find the experience of explaining the sexually reproductive details of their family formation embarrassing and difficult when they are younger, and that it gets easier as they get older.

“I think it was really hard for me in elementary school and middle school to talk about my [conception] without using sexualized words, which I was very uncomfortable with through about 6th or 7th grade,” she says. *“But I DID want people to understand and validate my family,”* she adds.

One DCP summarizes the difficulty by stating, *“Well, the word sperm is almost always met with a resounding ‘Eww!’ especially in elementary school.”* Another DCP says,

“I found that my peers in elementary, middle and even high school didn’t have the language about reproduction or conception that I had. My parents made sure I was well informed, but my peers were not. It made it hard to discuss with them, knowing their parents had either not informed them at all, or lied to them using stories about a stork or other ideas.”

Despite how other people might react, using the accurate medical terms to describe how your parent(s) conceived you is appropriate. The glossary at the beginning of this guide has definitions of terms that may be useful for you to explore.

But if you do feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or unable to use these terms with others, it is also okay to use less details when sharing your story. It is also okay to completely not share about your donor conception story at different points in your life. You can keep it simple and just share *who* your parent(s) are and not go into *how* they had you. You can also say something general like, "My parents used someone else's egg/sperm to have me" or if born through surrogacy, "someone else carried me so I could be born."

In elementary school, some people say they were very open about donor conception and/or surrogacy, while others describe not being able to talk about it because their peers lacked education about reproduction. *"I used the term 'artificial insemination' and explained it matter of factly when I was in 3rd grade,"* says a 24-year-old from Oakland, California. *"Some kids did not get it, but because I knew how it worked and knew that I was a human who was born, I was able to explain it,"* he writes. Another person says,

"I was really honest, super blunt. I just said it straight out, my parents are gay and I was artificially inseminated. I told my peers exactly what it was. I remember wanting to tell them [as soon as possible], so they would know off the bat who I was. I got made fun of sometimes and some people thought I was weird."

Other people say they tried to explain donor conception but were less successful. One DCP, who is now 22, says she would tell people she was "artificially inseminated," but explains that "no one understood" what she was talking about. Even if they were out about discussing insemination in elementary school, many people say that middle school was the hardest time to talk about how they were conceived. Most people describe how increasing social pressures to fit in caused them to avoid the topic.

"I was out [about being a DCP] in elementary school and it was no problem since my peers were too young to understand or to be intolerant. In middle school and high school the students were very intolerant and I was closeted about my mom and by association, [donor conception]," explains a DCP living in Florida.

Often people find ways to avoid the topic in middle school by not disclosing that they have an LGBTQ+ parent. *"I would often omit information [about my family] (if someone thought one mom was an aunt I wouldn't correct them),"* writes a DCP. Another person says that she did not talk about donor conception at first. But, once it became known that she was born through donor conception, it wasn't as big of a deal as she thought it would be.

"At school I avoided the subject like the plague. I let people believe that my parents had

divorced, didn't mention the two mothers thing except to really close friends, and I spent the whole time feeling nervous that it would come up," she says. "I told one very close friend about my mums, who told the entire school, and after that just saying, 'My mum wanted a baby so my dad who is her friend gave her sperm' didn't seem like a particularly big deal," she goes on to explain.

In high school, DCP generally find talking about donor conception can get easier. Your friends are older and in some cases have gotten to know you better. *"By 12th grade, I had a solid friend group and was finally comfortable telling people I had two moms and explaining about my donor and my sister's donor,"* states a DCP living in Pennsylvania. Another person says that when she reached high school she trusted that more people would be mature enough to handle the topic.

"I was more open and honest about the process, the legal concerns my parents faced, the complexities of being one of the first families using DI in their community, the process of locating a donor, and sometimes my experience within it. I disclosed more and trusted those I shared to engage intelligently/maturely," she says.

While talking about donor conception can get easier for some, challenges still remain. One DCP, now a senior in college, says that when she was in high school, mentioning *"sperm [was] finally not so inflammatory,"* but admits that she has *"never been very successful at talking about"* insemination.

For many, talking with others about their family formation story gets easier over time.

"There have always been people who did not accept me because of it, and there have always been rumors going around school, but I figure that if they have a problem with my parents and their decision, they do not deserve to be my friend anyway," says Lucas, 16, from Illinois. He adds that it has been important to rely on the people who would accept his family. *"There have always been people that have supported [me]...my best friend in fifth grade stood up for me one time when I was being made fun of by a couple of kids regarding it,"* he writes.

Another DCP, who says she has become more comfortable talking about donor conception, also explains that she has learned she does not have to change her background for other people. *"I am now more comfortable with sharing my story if I feel the situation is right. But I have also realized that even if the people are not ready to accept me and my family for what we are then they are probably not the people I should be trying to relate to. I should not have to change my background and therefore myself for others."* Another adult DCP from Massachusetts agrees, *"Who my parents are, and who I am, is just a fact - dealing with the homophobia or ignorance of others is not something I will do any more. As a kid, it was harder to navigate, now I have the confidence and community to support me."*

Finally, a DCP from Kentucky advises DCP to be proud of and stand up for their families. *"How*

you were born is part of your identity, but it doesn't define you. Never be afraid to stand up for your parents and family, even if you are in the minority, because they are what truly make you who you are," she writes.

When People Make Wrong Assumptions About Your Family

One of the most common experiences COLAGErs face is getting questions from others who think or assume they were raised by one mom and one dad. Sometimes the hardest thing can be explaining that families come in all shapes and sizes, since unfortunately, many people still don't understand that there are an infinite number of ways to make and define a family.

If you do not have one mom and one dad, questions like, "What does your mom do for a living?" or "What is your dad's name?" can cause anxiety and awkwardness. *"It has always been difficult in situations when people ask me what my dad does, or teachers ask my dad's name for contact information at school,"* explains one person from Illinois.

In these situations, there are a few different ways to respond. If you feel comfortable, you can share the details about your family, with something like, "Actually, I don't have a mom, I have two dads" or whatever is true for you. You can also avoid the question and say something like, "Actually, I'd rather not share." You can also answer in a vague way and try to change the subject, like, "I'm not sure, but my dad is a teacher" or "Actually, my mom's name is more interesting." And lastly, each person must gauge their own safety in each interaction, and sometimes that may mean you consider if you are able to tell the truth or not in any given scenario. While lying is usually not a great idea, there are times where answering a question in a way that isn't true may be the safest option for you in that moment. You may find that overtime, you may become more comfortable answering honestly and that it is important to you to show people they need to expand their understanding of family. Or you may find that some people don't need to know the details and it isn't worth your time to explain. Both are okay!

Pamela, a DCP from Washington, D.C. says the hardest part about talking about her family is facing people *"who question and challenge my assertion that family are simply the people who love you."* Other people have had similar experiences and say that it has been hard to face people who cannot understand their families. *"I am teased about my family makeup because it's 'different,'"* says a DCP from New York. Another person says the hardest part for him is other people not comprehending how *"families different from their own could actually function and be a good family."*

Other COLAGErs find it awkward socially to 'out' themselves as people with an LGBTQ+ parent. *"I felt awkward having my two moms come up on senior night for the football team,"* says a DCP from Southern California, but adds, *"friends supported me and I did it anyways."* Another DCP, referring to discussing his family, says, *"It was less about feeling ashamed and more out of*

avoidance of having to deal with the awkwardness. This was especially difficult when connected to (potential) romantic relationships." "[I] worried specifically, that boys I dated would find out my mother was a lesbian and lose interest in me," adds another DCP. Despite these fears about romantic interests, one person says he came to the conclusion that "the people I liked most were the people who accepted my family."

While it can be hard to explain your family in certain situations, some DCP have found successful ways of describing their families to peers. One 22-year-old DCP says that she was able to explain her donor situation by discussing what makes a family.

"Usually, I would just tell people I have two moms because they are the ones who my peers would see around me. But when people asked about my dad I would describe him as a 'donor/dad who is more of a close uncle.' I would also tell them that I have other men in my life who I think of as my dads and that I don't believe genetics is what makes a family," she says.

Sample Language People Use to Describe Their Families

"Every baby grows from a sperm and an egg, but the sperm/egg that made me came from a person outside my family."

"My parent(s) got the egg/sperm used to make me from an egg/sperm bank."

"The person who gave birth to me is not genetically related to me, since my parents chose to use a gestational surrogate to have me."

For People with Anonymous or Open Identity Donors

If you were born using an anonymous or open identity sperm or egg donor, that may mean that you don't have a person in your life that you consider to be a 'dad' or a 'mom'. Sometimes, this can be difficult for your peers to understand, if they haven't been taught about different ways to create a family.

"In third grade, many of my peers were unable to understand insemination and told me repeatedly that having two moms was not possible, so I really did not discuss it until I got older and they could understand it," writes a person from Illinois.

Another person shares a similar story about people not believing he has no dad. *"I have trouble explaining when other kids ask, 'How come you don't have a dad?' or tell me that I have to have one, and he must have left me when I was little, or died or something else that isn't true. I get frustrated when people won't understand,"* he explains. One COLAGEr writes,

"I don't consider my donor to be my dad or my father in any sense of the words. My donor is that, a donor to my conception, I don't feel a relationship to this person or consider him a part of my family. I understand this is difficult for some others to understand, but it's clear

that those people may not understand that LGBTQ+ families - actually all families - are made up by relationships that may or may not have to do with sharing genetic material with those individuals."

Many people have experienced similar situations to ones described above and some go as far as to say facing these kinds of questions is the hardest part about being a COLAGEr. One person with an anonymous donor advises her fellow DCP with LGBTQ+ parents to *"remember that [you] can define [your] family by whatever criteria [you] choose and that [you] need not accept others' definitions of who [your] family is."*

You can decide what to do in this situation. You may choose to try and explain what it means that you have a donor. Or you can ignore their questions altogether. And as always, you can seek support from trusted teachers, friends, or family members to get their advice and help.

For People Who Know Their Donor

Especially if you know your donor, you may encounter some people who don't understand that your donor is not your parent. They may also falsely think that your donor is your "real parent." While your donor is genetically related to you, that does not automatically make them a parent to you, and in many cases the term donor is used to show that that person is *not* your parent.

"Mostly what's hard to explain is that I have a biological father who is a good friend of the family, but whom I don't consider a dad at all," says a DCP living in Washington, D.C.

A DCP from Maine says she has had similar experiences and explains that she is careful about the language she uses.

"I always use the word donor when I tell people about my dad because otherwise, people tend to say that he and my bio mom are my 'real parents.' I try to tell people that my moms are my 'real parents.' My donor has always been a strong presence in my life, but my moms are really my parents," she writes.

One DCP tells the story about how staff at her school did not recognize that her non-biological mom was one of her parents.

"Because I know my donor and because he went to school events, people sometimes referred to him and my bio mom as my 'parents'. Once I was even told I couldn't leave an extracurricular activity when my grandfather died because he was not my 'real' grandfather. To me, there is nothing more hurtful than having someone say that my donor is more of my parent than the mom who has raised me," she explains. (For advice on working with teachers and school administrators, see [Advice for Teachers, School Administrators, and Others Working in Schools.](#))

To try and avoid some of these difficulties, DCP, especially when they are young, may decide not

to explain the donor relationship and just answer questions about their donor as if they are their parent. *"By 3rd grade I do remember answering questions about what my dad did for a living by just saying he was a teacher because he was a known donor and that was his profession. This was sort of lying by omission of fact,"* writes a person from Pennsylvania. *"I simply call [my donor] my 'Dad' so I don't raise an awkward moment,"* adds another person with a known donor.

For People with a Gestational Surrogate

Addressing questions when you were born through gestational surrogacy can be difficult, especially with peers that may not have an understanding of conception. Often people are confused by the biological elements of your birth, how someone became pregnant with an embryo that did not include parts of their own biology. Some born through gestational surrogacy may make light of being a 'test tube baby' in order to help explain their story to peers.

One 20-year-old DCP from Massachusetts born through surrogacy shared an experience from elementary school,

"A classmate approached my dad, confused about how I did not have a mom. After a bit of back and forth, the classmate exclaimed 'but who's tummy did he come out of!' In that moment, my dad realized that the baseline understanding of a 'mom' having a baby did not make sense to my classmate because they knew I did not have a mom. My dad was then able to explain that my aunt carried me."

Additional language can vary widely based on comfort level, some prefer to only speak about their egg donor and allow others to assume what they want about your birth, while others make it known that a third party was involved. It is not your responsibility to teach someone about conception and birth if you do not feel comfortable doing so. It can help to discuss this topic early on with your parent(s) so that you feel comfortable explaining it yourself, should you want to. For another 21-year-old DCP from Massachusetts *"early and frequent conversations with my dads about my gestational carrier and my conception helped me feel more prepared to address questions from peers."* (See [Chapter 4: I Was Born Through Gestational Surrogacy](#) and [Talking With Your Parent\(s\) About Your Donor](#) in Chapter 3 for more information).

Getting Support

When facing the sometimes-difficult situation of discussing donor conception or your family, it is important to remember that there are people who can help you. Getting this support can be especially important when you are in a social setting where people might not understand the process of donor conception, or have much information about LGBTQ+ families. Parents, teachers, and other allies can work to make sure people around you are informed about your family and origins so it is not up to you to explain everything.

While you will not be able to get this kind of support in every social situation you face, in classroom settings and other regular social gatherings it can be helpful. One DCP from Iowa says she needed this kind of help from adults.

"One of the biggest issues for me growing up was my inability to fully articulate how I came to exist. Though my parents had given me the proper vocabulary and told me the whole sperm coming from California story, my classmates (as early as preschool) were curious yet lacked the reproductive vocabulary to understand the story I was trying to tell. ...Really I needed someone to teach my classmates about reproduction and different families because I, for many years, was left to do it myself and it was not easy for my 5-year-old self," she says.

If you are facing a similar situation, ask your parent(s) to help you talk with your teachers. When approaching your parent(s), it is good to be clear about whether or not you want your teacher to talk about your family specifically. Many COLAGErs have said they do not like to be outed by their parents at school. In other words, sometimes it can be uncomfortable when your parent(s) or teachers tell all your classmates you have an LGBTQ+ parent and were born through donor conception.

You can also get support from other DCP with LGBTQ+ parents through COLAGE, through the [Connect](#) page on our website.

Chapter 6: Opportunities, Media, and Art

Get Involved with COLAGE

There are several ways to get involved in COLAGE. You can connect with other queerspawn with were born through donor conception or queerspawn who have other identities that you might have, like being 2nd Gen (meaning you and your parent(s) both identify as LGBTQ+), being a person of color, having a disability, or being straight/culturally queer, and more! If you are interested in connecting with people who have similar experiences as you, go to our [Connect](#) page on our website.

You can also get involved with COLAGE through volunteering with us. If you are 10-13 years old, you can apply to join our Crew Advisory Committee. If you are 14-18 years old, you can apply to join our Youth Action Board. And, if you are 18+, you can apply to be a facilitator for COLAGE. To learn more about these opportunities, please visit our [Join Us](#) page.

Books for Older Youth and Adults

Book	Description
<p>Everything Conceivable: How Assisted Reproduction is Changing Men, Women, and the World Liza Mundy. Alfred A. Knopf. 2007.</p>	<p>An account of how assisted reproduction is helping to create different kinds of families. Is not exclusively about LGBTQ+ families, but includes a chapter on the start of the LGBTQ+ parenting movement.</p>
<p>And Baby Makes More: Known Donor, Queer Parents, and Our Unexpected Families Edited by Susan Goldberg and Chloe Brushwood Rose. Insomniac Press 2009.</p>	<p>A collection of stories of people in LGBTQ+ families with known donors.</p>
<p>The Kids: Children of LGBTQ Parents in the USA Gabriela Herman. 2017.</p>	<p>A photobook featuring more than fifty portraits of children brought up by gay parents in America, sixth in a groundbreaking series that looks at LGBTQ communities around the world</p>
<p>Families Like Mine: Children of Gay Parents Tell it Like It Is</p>	<p>A now classic text describing the experiences of adult COLAGErs through their own</p>

Abigail Garner. Harper Collins Publishers. 2004.

testimonials.

She Looks Just Like You: A Memoir of (Nonbiological Lesbian) Motherhood
Amie Klemphauer Miller. Beacon Press. 2010.

The personal true story of a lesbian mother raising a child to which she is not biologically related.

Who's Your Daddy? And other Writings on Queer Parenting
Edited by Rachel Epstein. Sumach Press. 2009.

A collection of short personal stories written by COLAGErs and their family members. Several stories are written by DCP.

Spawning Generations: Rants and Reflections on Growing Up With LGBTQ+ Parents
Sadie Epstein-Fine and Makeda Zook. Demeter Press. 2018.

A collection of stories by queerspawn of various ages and backgrounds.

Films/Series

In My Shoes (2005)

A COLAGE produced film telling the real life stories of different COLAGErs and their families, one of which is a DCP.

Our House (2000)

A documentary that follows several LGBTQ+ headed families, including one family that has two daughters born through donor insemination.

Nuclear Family (2021)

A three-part documentary series following filmmaker Ry Russo-Young as she turns the camera on her own past to explore the meaning of family. In the late 70s/early 80s, when the concept of a LGBTQ+ family was inconceivable to most, Ry and her sister Cade were born to two lesbian mothers through sperm donors. Ry's idyllic childhood was threatened by an unexpected lawsuit which sent shockwaves through her family's lives and continues to reverberate today.
<https://www.hbo.com/nuclear-family>

Online Resources

Queerspawn Resource Project

The QRP curates an ever growing list that centers the experiences of people with LGBTQ parents

and guardians. These resources for, by, and about queerspawn are gathered here to give queerspawn of all ages a deeper and fuller look at their own identities, as well as to offer professionals, educators and families easy access to new tools with which to better understand and connect to the queerspawn in their lives. [View the Resource Center here](#). Suggested additions and feedback should be emailed directly to the Queerspawn Resource Project team.

Chapter 7: Additional Resources

“What Are My Rights?” A Legal Resource for People with LGBTQ+ Parents Born via Donor Conception

As one DCP said at a COLAGE gathering, *“The system is just not set up for us!”* DCP born to LGBTQ+ parents are often raised in families that are not fully recognized by current laws. Below are some common questions asked by DCP born to LGBTQ+ parents. The legal system is always evolving, especially in areas of law that affect our families, and as such the answers to most of these questions often depend on where you live. Consulting with an attorney licensed in the state where you live might be a helpful next step, and referrals are at the end of this section.

Q: Who is legally considered my parent?

A: This depends on your situation and where you live. First, anyone who has adopted you or has a court order saying they are your parent is a legally recognized parent. Second, if your parent has signed a valid [voluntary acknowledgment of parentage \(VAP\)](#), which is the equivalent of a court decree of parentage, then the parent is your legal parent. If you were born into a legal marriage and both of your parents are on your birth certificate, then your married parents are presumed to be your legal parents, but it is best practice for your parents to take additional steps to secure their parentage regardless of their marital status. Obergefell, the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that legalized gay marriage in every state, and/or the Respect for Marriage Act do not legally protect parentage rights for LGBTQ+ parents.

If your non-biological parent does not have a court judgment or equivalent, it depends on where you live. Some states recognize that non-biological parents can have rights if they have functioned as a parent, but most states do not (yes, even in 2023). For example, a non-biological parent might be a “holding out” parent or a “de facto” parent based on your state and your circumstances. In general, it is best practice for parents to secure a judgment of parentage, adoption, or VAP to secure their legal parent-child relationship with you if possible.

An important thing to know is that looking at your birth certificate may not answer the question of who your legally-recognized parents are. You may have a legal parent who is not listed on your birth certificate, or your birth certificate might list someone who is not treated as your parent under the law. What matters (legally) is what the law says about who your parents are. Unfortunately, the law does not always recognize our families. If you or your parents are unsure about your legal rights, you should talk to a lawyer who is experienced in LGBTQ+ family law in the state where you live.

Q: Is my gamete provider legally recognized as a parent?

A: Families are built in many ways, and it is important for there to be clarity on who is intended to be a parent and who is intended not to be a parent. In some families, a gamete provider is intended to be a parent, and in many families, they are not. The law may or may not reflect the reality of your family. Whether your gamete provider is a legal parent depends on what your state law says about gamete donors, what your other parent(s) intended, and who has functioned as a parent to you.

In states where there isn't a law about gamete providers, or if the law doesn't apply to your family, a known donor may be a legal parent unless there has been an adoption or termination of any rights they may have. In these situations, your gamete provider may be a legal parent even if your parent(s) did not intend for them to be a parent (even if they had a written agreement that they would not be treated as a parent). If you are concerned about who is your legal parent, you might want to ask the person or people functioning as your parent(s) or contact a lawyer in your state who works with LGBTQ+ families.

Q: If my parents are separated, do both my parents have rights to parenting time?

A: Anyone who is legally recognized as a parent can seek custody of or parenting time with their child. Some states also allow someone who has functioned as a parent to seek parenting time or custody under certain circumstances. In general, it is good for child development for children to maintain contact with the people who have functioned as their parents, sometimes these will not be people biologically related and sometimes they will be.

Q: Who should I list as my parents on government forms?

A: Generally, if an official government form asks who your parents are, you should list anyone who is legally recognized as your parent in the state where you live. If the form says "mother" and "father," and you have two parents, put one of your legally-recognized parents in each box, even if you have two mothers or two fathers. For private forms, like emergency contact information and school forms, you should list everyone you consider to be your parent.

Q: What is an identity release donor?

A: Today, many donors have agreed that their identity may be released after you turn 18. If you have an "identity release" donor and you want to know their identity, you can contact the sperm bank that worked with your parent(s) for identifying information after you turn 18. If you need medical information about your gamete provider before you turn 18, the sperm bank or agency may be able to provide you with some information about your gamete provider's medical history, even if they can't release their identity.

Q: Can I find out who my anonymous donor is?

A: If you were conceived via an anonymous provider, the sperm bank or agency that worked with your parent(s) is not allowed to share identifying information with you. However, at-home DNA tests have essentially ended the pretense of anonymity and such information is not difficult to obtain. Also, some programs may be willing to reach out to anonymous donors to see if they would be willing to release their identity.

Q: What does the law say in my state?

A: You can access maps that explain the current state of parentage laws for LGBTQ+ parents [via the Movement Advancement Project website](#).

For legal assistance, we recommend contacting [GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders \(GLAD\)](#) or the [National Center for Lesbian Rights](#) if you have specific follow-up questions or legal concerns. This resource is intended to provide accurate, general information regarding legal rights in the United States and should not be considered legal advice. Because laws and legal procedures are subject to frequent change and differing interpretations, COLAGE cannot ensure the information in this fact sheet is current nor be responsible for any use to which it is put. Do not rely on this information without consulting an attorney or the appropriate agency in the state where you live. Thank you to [GLAD](#) for assisting with the creation of this FAQ!

General Advice: What You Should Know About DCP with LGBTQ+ Parents

- We come from all types of families.
- We are very aware of discrimination against our families and we may be facing discrimination that our parents are not aware of.
- We have at least one donor, and many of us have gestational surrogates as well. We may also have other people involved in our conception and parenting.
- Many of us face great pressures from family and society to be, or at least appear, "straight," "normal" or "perfect," - or in other words, appear to be part of a heteronormative family with heteronormative values - in addition to all the other pressures we and our peers face through life.
- This pressure can also make it difficult for us and our families to admit when there are challenges such as abuse in our families.
- We can sometimes like to protect our families and not tell when we face or hear discrimination.
- We do not always know our biological medical history. This may or may not be important to us, and varies greatly from DCP to DCP.

Advice for Prospective and Current Parents

Often DCP born through egg or sperm donation are approached by new and prospective LGBTQ+ parents seeking advice and to learn about their perspectives.

This resource is designed to answer some of the most common questions these parents ask by sharing the first-person accounts of DCP. Some questions parents wonder about include: What kind of donor is best for my child? How should I properly discuss donor conception with my children? Will my child seek role models for people with different genders than their parents?

Every person who was born from a donor and/or surrogate has a different experience and different opinions on the best choices. However, there are some general agreements among DCP on several key issues.

Starting a Family Through Donor Conception is a Great Option

When asked what advice they would give to prospective parents, many DCP enthusiastically encourage people to start a family through donor conception. *"Go for it! If you're thinking about it, you should go for it! If you are unsure, then wait, but in my opinion, you should just go for it,"* writes a 12-year-old from Los Angeles.

Indeed, many DCP are excited about their families and say that, despite prospective parents' possible fears about starting a family that can be seen as outside the norm, they should have a child.

"Do it, do it, do it! My parents worried that I would be teased or feel out of place or be embarrassed, but I have not really experienced this and absolutely love my family and wouldn't change it for the world. LGBTQ parents are some of the best I've ever met (I think I have the best parents in the world) and hope that one day, this will not be weird or misunderstood at all," advises another DCP from Kentucky.

What Kind of Donor Should I Use?

For parents considering starting a family using an egg or sperm donor, one of the first questions is usually what kind of donor to use. Many factors will likely impact your decision about the donor, but it is imperative that you keep in mind the impact this choice will have on your future child. The feelings that DCP have about their donors vary dramatically. Some have extreme curiosity about their anonymous donor, while others are satisfied not knowing them. Despite this range of feelings, a vast majority of DCP with diverse family situations agree that, if possible, it is important to at least give your child the choice to contact or meet their donor later in life by using an open ID donor or known donor.

If you have already chosen an anonymous donor, do not fret. Many DCP understand the difficult decisions that parents must make, even if an open identity or known donor is the preferred

option. *"Although I do not think it hurts a child to have an anonymous donor, I have greatly benefited from the relationship I was able to have with my father,"* writes an 18-year-old from Massachusetts. One person who was raised without knowledge of his donor says that while knowing his donor may have benefited him in some ways, he likes the person he has become.

"I grew up with an anonymous donor and made what I think is a healthy and vibrant identity out of not knowing much about his identity. Had I known my entire life I may have been able to avoid some uncertainty as a child, and perhaps some moments of pain, but I think I would also be a different person and I have to say that I like who I am now," he states.

While DCP with different kinds of donor relationships say they enjoy their families, the idea of choice in discovering their genetic origins is often important to them. *"By using an unknown donor, parents are making a major life decision - knowing one biological parent - for their unborn child, whom they cannot consult,"* writes a DCP, urging parents to let their child make the decision about meeting their donor.

In fact, a majority of DCP who were surveyed for the original guide recommended parents use an open identity donor. One DCP writes, *"As a child of an anonymous donor, I recommend choosing open identity donation so that your kid can have the choice of establishing a relationship with the donor."* One person from Minnesota says that even though she does not have an interest in meeting her donor, she advises parents to use an "open identity donor" so their future children "can decide maturely if they want to know [their donor]."

Many DCP see the option of an open identity donor as a middle ground between an anonymous donor and a known donor. Using an open identity donor protects parents from custody disputes with a donor and allows children to be more mature when they meet their donor.

"I think that you shouldn't use an anonymous donor because then no matter what your kid(s) want to know they won't be able to ever have a chance of knowing. I don't think you should use a known donor because then when the child is a little older... the relationship between the child and the donor may be awkward," advises a DCP from New York.

Another person agrees and writes,

"I believe what was best for me was having an open identity donor. I was able to contact and meet him when I was emotionally prepared for the relationship... With meeting the donor earlier I think I would have felt more pressure to include him in my daily life and establish a father/daughter relationship. Now we can develop our relationship at our own pace and without pressure."

Finally, a third person with an open identity donor says much of the same thing:

"I would recommend selecting an open identity donor. It's only fair that your child should have the option of one day trying to locate him. Although, I think it's good for people to be

18 or older before meeting their donor so that they can be emotionally mature enough for the intense, and often overwhelming situation."

For other DCP, the distinction between an open identity and a known donor is less important than having the option to know a donor.

"As a kid who has limited information about my donor and went through a horrible situation involving a known donor, I still say use a known donor because the little that I do know has helped me figure out who I am as a person and who I am in the world," writes a 30-year-old DCP from New York.

Other people say they enjoy having the chance to know their donor and understand that their donors wanted to help create a family. *"I have heard some children of anonymous donors say that they wondered if their [donor] even wanted to make a life or if they just wanted the money that went along with it. As the daughter of a known donor I have never doubted that my donor wanted to help my moms make a family,"* states a DCP.

Importance of Openness and Transparency with DCP

No matter what kind of donor and/or surrogate you choose, the most important thing is to be open about your choices. Your children deserve to know about how they were conceived and why you made that choice. Often, LGBTQ+ parent(s) have no choice but to be open and honest with their children because most COLAGeRs are questioned at very young ages about how they were born and the make up of their family. This level of openness from LGBTQ+ parents creates positive associations with being donor conceived for COLAGeRs. This level of openness may be something that some straight parents who used donor conception may struggle with communicating and being honest about with their children, but DCP have a right to know the truth about their conception story.

The most common advice DCP have for prospective parents is "be open." DCP are curious about how they came to be and would like to know as much as they can about decisions their parents made that affect their life. It is important for parents to create a safe, non-judgmental space where they can engage with their children about topics related to their genetic origins. When you start these conversations, it is important to remember not to assume you know what life is like for your children and to keep bringing up the topic so your children can feel comfortable discussing their donor and/or surrogate.

DCP like to know why their parents selected their donor and/or surrogate. Often people ask this question not to make parents feel guilty or to question their parents' decision, but to honestly understand more about themselves. *"Whatever decision you make [about a donor], it is one you will need to be able to explain to your child, and one they will need to be able to explain to other people,"* writes a DCP.

Indeed, many people have said that while they would have preferred a different kind of donor, they understood why their parents chose their donor and were not upset. This can be a hard subject for a child to bring up, so make sure you are initiating these kinds of conversations. Also, as mentioned above, remember that children's thoughts about their genetic origins will evolve as they grow older and may shift or change many times over the course of their life. This means that talking about your children's genetic origins should be an ongoing conversation. As one DCP advises,

"If you do decide to have a child through [donor conception], as your child grows older make sure to stay open about it with them. My parents have always done that with me, and because of it, it's very easy for me to comfortably talk with them about my donor and ask them questions that I'm curious about."

It is also important to be open with your child about the process of donor conception so they can understand it for themselves, and be prepared to explain it to peers if they should choose to. Having correct information will also allow DCP to understand and view the process as a normal and valid way to form a family. Talk to your child about how they were born. *"Some parents may choose not to talk about donors or insemination because they think it emphasizes biological donors over parents, but I think it's important for children to know how their families came to be,"* advises a DCP living in Chicago. Another DCP stresses that it is important to teach children so they can talk to other people about how they were conceived.

"If you can, always be open with your kids about DI and your process of becoming pregnant and choosing to have children. And, if you are able, teach your children the vocabulary that we need in order to explain our families. One of the harder things growing up was trying to explain my family, which I was ALWAYS proud of, without knowing what to say," explains a person from Massachusetts.

Make sure your child does not view donor conception as something that is abnormal, or something to be ashamed about. As one person writes, *"Sometimes other children can be rude to children with donors so it's good to explain to the child that the way they were conceived is not unusual."* Connecting with other families built with donor conception and/or other LGBTQ+ families can provide community and context for your child.

DCP also say that it is important to be open with your child about their donor and/or surrogate, even if you have little information about the donor and/or surrogate. They stress that the desire to know about their donor and/or surrogate stems from their motivations to gain self-awareness. It does not come from feeling that their families are inadequate.

One DCP says that it was easy for him to understand his genetic origins because his parents were clear about where he came from. *"Be up-front about it and be supportive if your child wants to know who the donor is,"* he advises. *"I knew from the time I was very little that I had a 'seed dad'*

and I think it would have been weird if my parents had ignored this," he continues.

Another DCP advises,

"Do your best to create a stable definition of family for your children, whatever that may mean for your particular situation. I think it's important that children know who their family is, but that there may also be a nice and varied extended network of people that they can turn to for additional role models."

The Role Model Question

In this section, we discuss how gender can play into the idea of role models. Although there are more than two genders and gender as a whole is a social construct, we kept these quotes from the 2010 version of the guide that uses binary language because they may be helpful to other DCP with same-gender parents.

DCP who have one parent or parents of the same gender are often asked if they feel as if they missed out on having a role model of another gender. First and foremost, the most important thing is for your children to grow up surrounded by people who love, care for, and protect them. If these people represent a variety of identities, your child will probably have an easier time adjusting to the large, diverse world we live in. Families come in all shapes and sizes.

Many COLAGErs do not believe that our role models need to be found only in our parent(s) or family, but that role models that represent a variety of genders can be found through other important relationships in our lives. One DCP who was raised by two lesbians says, *"In my case my mom used a friend as a donor, but I have never considered him a father figure and I have never felt the lack of a father figure."*

However, as another DCP states, a person can feel they have a complete family and still want additional role models.

"If your [sperm] donor will not be a part of the child's life, make sure to have other male influences in the child's life and work to keep those men involved with the child's life. It is important to have examples of caring men in your life, and while lesbian moms can give you as much love as heterosexual parents, they can't give you this example of a caring male figure without some help," she says.

Other adult COLAGErs agree that while it is not important to have a relationship with both biological parents, it can be important to build friendships with people of multiple genders.

"I think it is important for children to have positive role models, both male and female. I wish I had had more of a positive male figure in my life. I think it would have helped me down the road with self-esteem toward the opposite sex. I think whether or not a child knows their biological father is not important, however I do believe that having role models and strong relationships with adults of both sexes will benefit the later development of a child more

than if a child grows up isolated with only one sex,” one DCP writes.

Another DCP adds,

“My moms were important role models to me in so many ways, they were role models from a gender perspective as their womanhood took many forms. Both my moms being butch allowed me to understand the broad spectrum of femininity and womanhood that was possible. In addition, I benefited from being surrounded by other women who displayed their gender in many other ways, some much more feminine than my moms. I had teachers that were men, and the fathers of friends of mine, who all played a role in showing me different examples of manhood and masculinity as well. And I learned from my parent’s friends that are transgender as well. Having people in my life of many different gender identities and gender expressions gave me lots of examples to better understand myself, and make decisions about how I most feel comfortable in the world.”

Tips for Talking with Your Child About Donor Conception

Young children can be curious and have questions about different types of families. It is very helpful for them to have names for different family structures, families with LGBTQ+ parents, adoptive families, foster families, grandparent headed families, single parent families, recombined families and so on.

Adults should be responsible for helping children describe their families so that they are not alone in trying to explain these differences to their peers. Starting young and considering it an ongoing discussion will help normalize donor conception as an open topic in the family.

To older children who may have questions about conception, one explanation is:

“To make a baby, you need sperm, an egg, and a womb. These sperm and egg can come from the parent(s), or can be donated by other people. The person carrying the baby can be a parent or a surrogate. Sperm enters a vagina of the person who will carry the child, finds an egg, and grows into a baby. Or, sperm and egg can be combined outside of a womb by a doctor and then placed inside the womb of the person who will carry the baby while it grows. ”

“I Want to Talk About My Donor and/or Surrogate”

While it is incredibly important to do, talking about a donor and/or surrogate can be challenging for both parents and children. In some cases, the stories that some parents and children believe about their dynamic are not actually true. The incorrect assumptions fall in three main categories.

- 1** Parents believe that acknowledging or discussing the donor and/or surrogate will encourage their children to want to meet their donor and/or and form a relationship with this person, which could supplant their role as parents.

In reality, DCP want to talk about their donor and/or surrogate, not necessarily as a way to add a parent to their family, but as a means of better understanding themselves and their identities. And when parents don't create space to discuss the donor and/or surrogate, it can lead to a rift in the relationship.

As DCP stress over and over, their desires to meet their donors and/or surrogate are driven by motivation to discover more about their genetic origins or what made their birth possible, not to find an additional parent. *"I know that the little that I know about my donor has helped me so much in terms of figuring out who I am as a person. Biology has nothing to do with what constitutes a family but in the individual search for self, biology plays a part and I'm grateful for the little that I do know,"* writes a DCP.

2 Parents believe that their children's questions about their donor and/or surrogate are a sign that their children are unhappy with their family.

DCP emphasize that their curiosity about their donor and/or surrogate does not mean they are displeased with their families. *"Although I am curious about the donor that my parents used, I don't feel as if my life is incomplete and unhappy because I don't have more information about him or a relationship with him,"* explains a DCP. Another DCP adds, *"I love my family more than anything else, but I still want to know what the donor looks like, if my brother and I look like him, if we have any of the same mannerisms, or anything like that."* Identity is formed by many factors, and having information about one's biological/genealogical origins is one factor that may be important to some DCP.

3 Children believe that talking about their donor and/or surrogate will upset their parents

From a youth's perspective, broaching the subject of their donor and/or surrogate can also be hard. Children who are generally happy with their families are very conscious of their parent's feelings and do not want to hurt them by bringing up the subject of their donor and/or surrogate. In addition, if parents do not discuss their child's donor and/or surrogate openly, a child can feel as though the subject of the donor and/or surrogate is off limits, finding it awkward to bring up. This is one reason that it is so important to make conception and information or curiosity about one's donor a common and regular part of conversation within your family. It will give your DCP the space to explore their feelings and identity with you as their parent, and dissolve any fears or assumptions they may make about how you will support them.

Many DCP have trouble bringing up the subject of their donor and/or surrogate because they do not want it to appear as though they are unhappy with their parents or family situation. A 14-year-old DCP from Connecticut says that it can be "uncomfortable" bringing up the topic of her donor.

She adds, *"I just feel a little guilty whenever I do talk to them about it, because I don't want them to think I'm not happy with them as my parents or anything like that."*

DCP who have the option to meet their donors and/or surrogates have similar feelings of guilt related to talking about meeting their donor and/or surrogate, but say their parents' support in the process is extremely important. People who have gone through the process of meeting their donor, for example, advise parents to not view their child's desire to meet their donor as negative. *"Don't be offended when they want to meet the biological parent. It's not a reflection on your parental legitimacy, the love they have for their family, etc. - it's just natural curiosity about biological origin, which you would have in their position too,"* explains a DCP. This can also be true for those who have a gestational surrogate and are curious about meeting the person who carried them.

This worry from parents can be especially true in LGBTQ+ families where negative societal pressure is placed on parents and can make them feel as though their parenting is inadequate. If this is your situation, make sure you have resources that can help you address and overcome these feelings.

As a parent from Sacramento, California describes,

"Coming to terms with your child's questions can be hard, but once you understand your child's perspective the topic is an easy one to discuss. When I was trying to get pregnant, and when the kids were too little to ask questions, I was a bit afraid of questions -- worried that curiosity about the donor would indicate a perceived lack in their lives, and defensive about the adequacy of a single-parent family. Once it became real, that anxiety dissolved. When I affirm the legitimacy of their wonderings and longings, and am non-defensive, it turns out not to be a big deal," she explains.

If you are having these kinds of fears, it is key that you acknowledge these emotions. Being open about feeling this way will make it easier for your child to honestly express their feelings to you.

Another DCP who has met her donor agrees. *"Don't see it as an insult to you if the kid wants to get to know their donor. It's a completely different kind of relationship, and doesn't mean that you are lacking in any way,"* she writes. Several DCP expressed fear that their parents might not support their decision to meet their donor, and cited the importance of having parental support while going through the process. *"I would feel uncomfortable being curious about my donor and searching him out if my mother had not been supportive of such an idea,"* writes a DCP from Colorado.

Often DCP also want parents to emotionally support them when they meet their donor. *"I met my donor with my parents present. It was not something I could have done alone. I also had my half-sister with me, we had met beforehand. It was emotional for myself and my parents and their*

presence was important to me," says a DCP.

Ten Things to Remember When Talking with Your Child About Their Donor and/or Surrogate:

- 1** Don't be afraid to bring it up: Children may feel that the topic of their donor and/or surrogate is off limits or think it is an awkward subject to bring up, especially if it has not been discussed amongst the family previously. If you offer to share information about the donor and/or surrogate, your child is more likely to open up about their curiosities. Additionally, remember that discussing your child's donor and/or surrogate should be an ongoing conversation as your child grows and matures.
- 2** Listen to your child's curiosities: Often curiosities about a donor are driven by a desire to know more about oneself. Hearing your child discuss their curiosities can help build understanding and make you feel more comfortable with the topic. However, remember that it is not your child's responsibility to make you feel comfortable about their donor and/or surrogate. If you would prefer to avoid the topic donor conception it is best to address these feelings so you can overcome them.
- 3** Offer to share all information you have: For a DCP, every detail about their donor and/or surrogate can matter. In cases of anonymous or open-identity donors, parents believe that since they only have very limited information about their child's donor (height, eye color), it is not worth sharing. Most DCP would disagree. If you have a donor information sheet or other materials, make them available to your child.
- 4** Talk about why you chose your child's donor/surrogate: Your motivations for having a child and selecting your child's donor and/or surrogate are part of your child's origin story. If a child is frustrated with their donor and/or surrogate situation, it may also be beneficial to share why you thought selecting the donor that you did made sense at the time. Children are often able to understand a parent's perspective on this issue and accept their parent's decision.
- 5** Do not say negative things in front of your child: If children hear negative things being said about their donor and/or surrogate they can believe you have those same negative feelings about them. It is important not to say negative things about a known donor or gestational surrogate who may have become estranged from your family.
- 6** Take care of yourself: Make sure you are able to address any of your own insecurities about being an LGBTQ+ parent who is raising a donor conceived child. It should not be your child's responsibility to reassure you.
- 7** Create a safe space for your children to talk about their donor and/or surrogate: Make sure to listen to your children when they want to talk about their origins. Validate their questions with positive feedback.

- 8 Create a positive narrative: Rather than being negative about your children’s origins, create a positive narrative for them. For example, rather than talking about how you had limited options to conceive because you are LGBTQ+, talk about how much your child was wanted and how special you think they are.
- 9 Remind your kids that you will be okay: Reassure your children that you will be okay no matter what feelings they have about their donor and/or surrogate. This is especially true for parents who chose an open identity donor. Often children will try to protect parents and have hesitations about meeting their donor and/or surrogate because they do not want to upset their parents.
- 10 Practice talking to your children: Bringing up the topic of a donor and/or surrogate with your children can be difficult. Do not be afraid to role-play this conversation with a friend or fellow parents.

Advice for Teachers, School Administrators, and Others Working in Schools

For DCP with an LGBTQ+ parent, school can be a challenging environment. Not only must these youth face questions about their family structure, but they must also talk about their genetic origins and conception—a challenge for a person of any age. While teachers and school administrators cannot always help solve every situation for people in this constituency, there are several things teachers can do to make their classrooms feel safe and friendly for DCP with an LGBTQ+ parent. The following is a list of negative situations commonly faced by DCP at school along with advice on how authority figures in schools can try to prevent such situations.

Mother’s Day/Father’s Day events Can Be More Inclusive

Many schools celebrate Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. These celebrations, when not handled correctly, can be hurtful to COLAGErs. One lesbian parent said that when her daughter’s school celebrated Mother’s Day she was “stuffed in as an afterthought” because she was the “other mother.” To avoid these kinds of situations, keep in mind the following recommendations. It is a good idea to clarify to all of the students that all families are different and not everyone has a mom and/or a dad. Allow children to celebrate any mother or father figures in their lives, perhaps a grandmother or uncle, or even the parent of a close friend who they care for. If teachers have events to celebrate these holidays, it is also important not to make it mandatory for students to have their mother or father attend the event in person. Often COLAGErs are uncomfortable explaining why they are bringing two moms to the Mother’s Day event or no one to the Father’s Day event. An alternative to having two separate celebrations is having one Parent’s Day where all different kinds of families can be celebrated. There are many ways to more inclusively help children learn about parents/parenting, and celebrate days such as Mother’s and Father’s Day.

Family Tree Projects Can Be Challenging

Many DCP say that at some point when they were in elementary or middle school they were asked to complete a project that traced their family tree. This seemingly benign activity can be a challenge for DCP. Many DCP have an anonymous donor, meaning they know little or nothing about one half of their genetic background. Sometimes children with anonymous donors are unhappy with not being able to know more about their genetic background and these kinds of activities can highlight these negative feelings. Some DCP know their donor, but do not view this person as a parent. For these people, family tree projects can be confusing or challenging because they don't feel as though their genetic background is linked to their "parents." Other DCP who know their donor may see their donor as a parent along with their two same-sex parents and not understand why there should be only two branches on their family tree. If you choose to have family history projects in your classroom, remind children that your family is not necessarily people to whom you are genetically related. Also, mention that people's family trees will look different depending on who is in their family structure. Try to be conscious not to use language that might make children with LGBTQ+ parents feel excluded.

Understand the language to describe donor conception

One of the most challenging things for DCP is explaining their genetic origins to their peers.

Often youth do not understand what "donor conception" means and ask for an explanation. Answering this kind of question often means using words like "sperm", "egg", and other sexual reproduction related terminology. While DCP often use medically correct terminology to describe donor conception, they can still be misunderstood by teachers and get in trouble for discussing inappropriate subjects.

"I was really honest, super blunt. I just said it straight out, my parents are gay and I was artificially inseminated. I told my peers exactly what it was," says one DCP, adding, *"The school didn't really know how to deal with it."*

In these situations it is important to be aware of DCP with LGBTQ+ parents in your class and be aware of when these kinds of conversations might arise. Also, it is a good idea to be clear in the classroom that all kinds of families should be respected. This way the student can feel safe about telling a teacher if they are having trouble explaining donor conception.

Normalize diverse types of family formation

It is important for COLAGErs to have their family structures normalized in school environments.

"I am teased about my family makeup because it's 'different.' The kids in my school are afraid of different people so they act mean about it," says a middle school aged DCP from New York. A lesson on how all families are created differently and come in all kinds of shapes and sizes can go a long way toward making COLAGErs feel more accepted in the school community. These kinds

of lessons can take all different forms, but the most important thing to emphasize is that there is no “normal” family and that everyone comes from different kinds of families and backgrounds.

Understand DCP with LGBTQ+ Families

DCP with LGBTQ+ parents can have families that can be seen as outside ‘the norm’. On some occasions this means that a child’s “parents” are not recognized as such, leading to confusing or hurtful situations. There are three general kinds of donors: an anonymous donor, an open identity donor (a donor whose identity becomes known when the child turns 18), and a known donor. When it comes to DCP born through surrogacy, their surrogate is either also their egg donor or a gestational surrogate meaning the egg was donated by someone else. Within these general categories, there can be an endless number of family situations.

It is important to communicate with a DCP and their family to know who the child views as parents. This is especially true for people who have a known donor. In some instances a known donor can be present in a child’s life but not be seen as a parent. In these family situations school staff can be confused about who is a child’s legal guardian.

“Now that I am in charge of my own medical appointments, finances, job applications etc. it would be really helpful if doctors, school faculty and such knew more about donors. It’s sometimes hard to convince people that I have two moms and still happen to know my dad, even though he’s not my guardian,” explains a DCP.

“Because I know my donor and because he went to school events, people sometimes referred to him and my bio mom as my “parents”. Once I was even told I couldn’t leave an extracurricular activity when my grandfather died because he was not my ‘real’ grandfather. To me, there is nothing more hurtful than having someone say that my donor is more of my parent than the mom who has raised me,” adds another person.

To avoid these kinds of situations, make sure you are aware of exactly who a child’s parents are and do not assume that a child’s donor is considered a parent.

Protect COLAGERS’ Anonymity

While COLAGERS generally benefit when families like theirs are discussed in the classroom, they do not always like being singled out as “the kid with gay parents.” One DCP from California said that she felt “tokenized” in school settings because she was always used in teaching settings to show how all people can be different. Many COLAGERS are not “out” about their families and choose only to tell close friends about their families and genetic origins. Being outed by a teacher can be hard for a person who wants to have control over who knows about their family. If you are teaching a lesson on families make sure to make general statements about families rather than personally identifying people. This will avoid embarrassing the student or creating an awkward situation for them.

Use Inclusive Forms and Documents

When creating forms for your classroom or school, remember that having a space for a “mother” and a space for a “father” is often not representative of all families. *“I cannot express how sick I am of filling out forms looking for a father/mother. This continued into forms for colleges. If people could make the change of parent/parent it would make my life easier. It would also make other children who do not know or live with both parents feel less isolated,”* explains a DCP. This may seem like a small change, but, as described above, having to change forms can make a person feel outside the norm. Having all forms simply say “parent” is a small step that can make a big difference.

Advice for Medical Service Providers

In the United States alone, there are millions of people with one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ+) parent(s), a significant and growing percentage of which were born through donor conception.

While research shows that there are no significant developmental differences or negative effects on COLAGErs, these youth report facing significantly more prejudice and discrimination because of societal homophobia and transphobia.

LGBTQ+ families, particularly families that include one or more non-biological parent, face a range of systemic impediments to the care and custody of children, including exclusion from a spouse’s health insurance coverage and hostility in school systems and health care settings.

Medical professionals are the first responders when it comes to making sure people are treated equally, regardless of their differences—like sexual orientation, gender identity or family status. Patients should feel safe and confident when they are in hospitals, clinics, or even on the operating table.

There are simple ways to make a medical practice environment safe and welcoming for COLAGErs and their families. Simple changes in everything from patient forms to office décor can have a significant impact on the comfort level and interactivity of a DCP of any age. Open communications between medical professionals and patients not only make the relationship easier, but it can also save lives.

Know About the Donor Relationship

As one person states, *“Now that I am in charge of my own medical appointments, finances, job applications, etc., it would be really helpful if doctors, school faculty and such knew more about donors. It’s sometimes hard to convince people that I have two moms and still happen to know my dad, even though he’s not my guardian.”* Getting to know your patient’s relationship to their donor is important. Not only will it allow you to better understand their medical history, but discussing

the topic will make people more comfortable with discussing their families. Different people can have different relationships with their donor. There are three general categories of donors: anonymous, open identity (a donor who becomes known when the child turns 18) and known donors. People with anonymous and open identity donors (who are not yet 18) probably have very little information about their donor and do not know their medical history. Known donor relationships can take all different forms, but, as mentioned above, it is important not to assume a donor is the patient's parent.

Enter Conversations with an Open Mind

It is best to withhold judgment when entering conversations with COLAGERS. Language can be quite stigmatizing. What does the child call their parents? Use accurate pronouns and language when talking about family or people. Practice how you'll treat an interaction and be open to critique and feedback.

Show Your Respect for Families

Show "signs" that LGBTQ+ families are welcome; even the subtlest hint of acceptance will be felt. Signs could include a poster, rainbow sticker, visually inclusive brochures or even the posting of a non-discrimination policy. An actual physical sign could be the creation and posting of an all gender bathroom. However, this must be backed up by true respect and understanding for diverse family structures.

Change Patient Intake Forms

Nothing can make COLAGERS more uncomfortable than intake forms. Whether it is a school release form, college application or a medical history sheet, the assumption that all people have a mother and father that they can give information on is sometimes daunting and off-putting. Changing forms to be more general and open to multiple parents may give more information than needed, but it conveys a sense of acceptance to the patient.

Go beyond "family" history as a predictor for illness or for preventative care

When providers rely on "family history" to establish medical records, some DCP may be faced with incomplete records or with the inability to share much information. Medical professionals can encourage medical genetic testing or genome testing for DCP to gain a clearer picture of one's genetic predictive information. Often, due to insurance policies, patients will need a referral from a medical professional to access medical genetic testing and begin working with a genetic counselor to understand the resources available to them.

Re-evaluate Policies and Procedures

Visitation rules are probably the most mentioned form of discrimination among kids of LGBTQ+ parents. Policies are created to limit the number of people and protect children from exposure; however, these policies can also be hurtful. Imagine a child getting their tonsils taken out can only

be visited by their biological mother or father. Not all LGBTQ+ families can afford powers of attorney to override access to loved ones. Redefining “family” to stretch beyond bloodlines can only aid in patient care.

Know the Ins and Outs of Outness

COLAGErs are at different levels of outness when it comes to their families and even their own acceptance. Just because the parents are open doesn't mean the kids are. Gauge the level of openness through conversation. Ask compassionate questions.

Avoid Assumptions in All Aspects of Work

Many children of LGBTQ+ parents are asked if they are also LGBTQ+. Studies have shown that children with LGBTQ+ are no more likely to be LGBTQ+ themselves than children of heterosexual parents.

Teach Yourself and Teach Others

Bring in workplace training on LGBTQ+ families, or bring in specialists in areas of trans families or families expanded through donor conception. Seek out LGBTQ+ medical associations and organizations and be an ambassador to others, like patients and co-workers. Medical professionals have a powerful link to the community and can create a significant difference in discrimination and stigma reduction. One good resource is the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (www.glma.org).

Thank You, COLAGE

This project would never have started or been possible without COLAGE. Founded in 1990, COLAGE is the only national organization for people with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer parents (LGBTQ+). COLAGE grew out of the of civil rights, feminist, and LGBT liberation movements in the United States. The founders of COLAGE – who were teenagers and young adults in the group’s first years – had grown up in the 1960s and 1970s, a time when there were few networks or resources for LGBTQ+ families – and fewer still for the children in these families. Most had experiences feeling that there were no other children like them, no other families like theirs.

In 1990, a small group of young people with gay and lesbian parents came together while their parents were attending an annual Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International conference. Recognizing that they had much to share with one another and the larger world about growing up in LGBTQ+ families, they soon began putting out a newsletter and running local chapters. Within two years they had formed a steering committee, drafted a mission statement, and set long-term goals for the newly created organization, and in 1995 opened a volunteer-run national office in San Francisco. In 1996, COLAGE explicitly added work with children of transgender parents to its mission and within three years it had become its own independent organization.

Today, as COLAGE celebrates its 33rd anniversary, the organization hosts over 40 virtual programs a year and has thousands of active supporters across the country and world. COLAGE also hosts Family Week, the largest gathering of LGBTQ+ families in the world. Family Week takes place in Provincetown, MA during the last week of July. The fun-filled Family Week includes opportunities to build community and to get empowered on today’s issues. COLAGE hosts daily workshops for youth 8-18 years old, recreational events, and peer chats for youth and adult COLAGErs. COLAGE also hosts Family Weekends around the US. Family Weekends are regional gatherings of LGBTQ+ families. Family Weekend will center local communities and include activities for youth, parents, and the whole family. We are combining the empowering COLAGEr-led workshops for youth with dynamic events for parents hosted by community partners. To learn more about our programs, visit www.colage.org.

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