



Serving All Pathways To Parenthood

All fertility journeys are unique

Starting a family is an exciting and life-changing time. But many LGBTQ+ individuals and couples don't know where to turn, or lack education and resources, making this exciting journey incredibly overwhelming. Variation in clinical practices and commitments to LGBTQI+ family creation, and limited funding opportunities, are just some of the obstacles that individuals and same-sex couples have to navigate on the journey towards parenthood. Thankfully, in Ontario, a new service has been created to make that path a little easier: Pride Parenthood.

Pride Parenthood was created with the goal of making the journey to parenthood attainable. Founded on the principles of equity and inclusivity, the service removes barriers and provides access to best-in-class fertility services for the LGBTQ2SIA+ community – growing a legacy for future generations. No one has ever established a fertility treatment referral service for gay people before because the approach to building family in fertility clinics has been geared to the heterosexual community. Pride Parenthood selected Anova Fertility & Reproductive Health as its preferred

partner not only because this fertility centre offers best-in-class fertility treatments, but because Anova is led by an LGBTQ2SIA+ community member, Dr. Marjorie Dixon, its founder, CEO and medical director.

As a proud member of the LGBTQ2SIA+ community, Dr. Dixon is acutely aware of the specific needs and challenges in the community. Her latest passion project is her collaboration with the launch of Pride Parenthood, a program with the sole mission of making the journey to parenthood more attainable for the LGBTQ2SIA+ community by supporting third-party assisted reproduction. It's Dr. Dixon's way of serving her community and all pathways to parenthood with comfortable access to the best fertility services in Canada.

"When I came onto the landscape more than 20 years ago, I recognized that there was not a safe place for people who were in my community," says Dr. Dixon. "In fact, there was a lot of misinformation about the services that could be afforded to everyone wanting to start a family.... This is where Anova was born."

A place where everyone is welcome

Anova Fertility & Reproductive Health opened in 2016 as a full-service fertility and IVF centre and as home to the first next-generation embryology laboratory in Canada. Today, they have four clinics (Toronto, North York, Waterloo and Guelph) and are considered leaders in innovation, education and communication for their high-quality, humanized fertility and reproductive care. The diverse team is dedicated to delivering a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to care through its extensive clinical care team, which includes physician specialists, reproductive and medical endocrinologists, licensed psychotherapists, nurses, laboratory technicians and skilled embryologists. In fact, their mission to provide individualized care and a boutique-like experience for growing families has been part of the company's goal since day one.

"I wanted to create the fertility centre that I would have wanted when I was an IVF patient," says Dr. Dixon, describing her vision for the clinics. "This translates to an offering with Canada's most technologically advanced embryology lab – all the while providing a warm, safe and inclusive atmosphere for all patients."

Finding a fertility clinic as an LGBTQ+ individual or couples is no easy task. While groups like Health Canada, the Canadian Fertility and Andrology Society, and provincial physician colleges regulate fertility medicine across the country, practice varies from one clinic to the next. And so does discrimination.

"Personally, I am deeply familiar with what it means to be marginalized. I am a Black, female, LGBTQI+ CEO in the medical realm," explains Dr. Dixon, who has been working in the field for over 20 years. "I wanted to create a place where everyone would be welcome and everyone would see themselves in their care providers and in the staff – all the people that you see as you go on the journey to creating a family."

The recently launched Pride Parenthood referral program offers the entire landscape of fertility services. What does that mean exactly? "If you require the services of somebody else's eggs or someone else's sperm or you require a uterus to carry your pregnancy... that all falls under the umbrella of third-party assisted reproduction," says Dr. Dixon.

Dr. Dixon's mission and reputation precedes her, something we found out from S. W. Underwood, an openly gay writer, teacher and researcher at the University of Toronto who shared with us their personal tale of family, surrogacy and access to fertility care for LGBTQI+ intended parents. Underwood began the journey to parenthood after their sister, who lives in British Columbia, offered to carry a baby for them.

"Shut out by fertility clinics in Vancouver, we turned to Anova Fertility in Toronto, where we became enamoured with Dr. Marjorie Dixon, whose compassion, intelligence and commitment to women's health and LGBTQI+ people creating families uplifted us," Underwood explains. "I appreciate that she immediately and sensitively recognized the social, cultural and economic context we bring with us. She demonstrated a clear understanding that LGBTQI+ people have real challenges: when intended parents like my partner and I come looking for medical help, it's not going

to be easy for us to immediately meet all the criteria for intended parents and their surrogate carrier – my sister, in this case. Rather than turning us away because we were not perfect candidates according to the standard guidelines, she promised to work with us, to work with my sister, to empower us to succeed on this fertility journey to parenthood.

"In addition to this sympathetic dedication from Dr. Dixon, we were comforted by the warmth of the clinic staff, their competent and earnest commitments to LGBTQI+ family planning, the confidence and expertise of the medical care team, and the breadth of knowledge about third-party programs, especially egg donor agencies, surrogacy agencies and legal firms," Underwood continues.

Of course, that's just one story of navigating the complex road to parenthood. Dr. Dixon is adamant that every individual has the fundamental right to grow their family.

"Each journey to parenthood is unique and should be treated as such," says Dr. Dixon. "Guidelines are in place to ensure quality care occurs – but we must acknowledge that they aren't one size fits all."



Dr. Marjorie Dixon, founder, CEO and medical director of Anova Fertility & Reproductive Health

For more information about beginning your pathway to parenthood, please visit prideparenthood.com.