

Choosing a surrogacy agency is not just a matter of personality fit or match speed. It is a decision about process discipline. The strongest agencies, and the strongest surrogate agency relationships, are built on screening, review, and accountability long before an embryo transfer is even scheduled.

People often start by asking about timelines or fees. Those matter, but they are downstream questions. The more revealing questions are about evaluations, testing, and oversight. They tell you how a surrogacy agency thinks, what risks it takes seriously, and whether it has built real safeguards for intended parents and gestational carriers.

Professional guidance in this area is clear on a few core points. Medical, psychological, and legal counseling should be part of a gestational carrier arrangement. A legal clearance letter and an executed contract, with independent legal counsel, should be in place before treatment starts. Psychological evaluation should be done by a qualified mental health professional with experience in gestational carrier evaluations, and that evaluation should use standardized, empirically validated testing. Screening and testing are recommended to reduce complications, even though certain federal rules do not require gestational carrier screening and testing in the same way.

That framework gives intended parents a practical way to evaluate surrogacy agencies. The ten questions below are the ones that tend to separate polished marketing from competent oversight.

Question one: who performs the psychological evaluation, and what exactly does that evaluation include?

This is one of the most important questions you can ask any surrogate company. A vague answer is not enough. "We do a psych screen" does not tell you much. You want to know whether the evaluation is handled by a qualified mental health professional who is experienced in gestational carrier evaluations, and whether standardized, empirically validated testing is part of the process.

That distinction matters. In practice, there is a major difference between an informal conversation and a structured evaluation. A casual interview may reveal whether someone presents well. It may not reveal whether the person has thought through the demands of a surrogate pregnancy, the boundaries of the relationship, or the emotional realities of carrying for someone else. A formal evaluation is designed to go deeper.

An agency that takes this seriously should be able to explain who conducts the evaluation, when it happens, and how the findings are used in matching and case management. If the agency becomes evasive, or treats psychological screening as a mere checkbox, that tells you something important about its standards.

One detail worth listening for is whether the agency relies only on in-house impressions or whether it involves specialists. Some organizations publicly describe access to licensed psychologists and other pregnancy experts. That does not automatically make them the best surrogacy agency for every family, but it does show a more developed support structure than a company that cannot name who is doing the mental health work.

Question two: do you require medical screening and testing even when certain rules do not strictly require it?

This question gets at an agency's risk culture. Professional guidance recommends screening and testing of gestational carriers and intended parents to reduce complications, even though the relevant federal framework does not require screening and testing of gestational carriers in the same way. The practical takeaway is simple: an agency can meet the minimum legal floor and still fall short of best practice.

A careful surrogacy agency should be comfortable saying that testing is part of its protocol because the goal is not simply technical compliance. The goal is to reduce avoidable complications. That means the agency should be able to explain how medical screening fits into the broader process and at what point in the journey it occurs.

This is also a place where intended parents sometimes get tripped up by speed. Fast movement can feel reassuring when you are eager to match, but speed without a strong screening sequence often creates trouble later. If an agency highlights quick matching, ask what was completed before those profiles were shown and what still remains outstanding. Quick is not necessarily careless, but you need to know what “quick” actually means.

One agency, for example, publicly says it has no fee upfront to share surrogate profiles and that this can allow for quick match time. That may be appealing, and for some intended parents it may be a useful feature. Still, the right follow-up question is not “how fast can we match?” It is “what screening has already happened before you present a profile, and what remains before treatment can begin?”

Question three: when do legal review and independent legal counsel come into the process?

Any reputable surrogate agency should have a serious answer here. Professional guidance recommends medical, psychological, and legal counseling for all parties. It also recommends that a legal clearance letter and an executed contract, with independent legal counsel, be in place before treatment starts. In some states, independent legal representation is required.

There are two parts to this question. The first is timing. Legal work should not be an afterthought squeezed in at the end. The second is independence. Intended parents and the gestational carrier should not be steered into a setup where one lawyer effectively serves everyone’s interests.

This is not bureaucracy for its own sake. Independent legal review protects all parties, and it reduces the risk that a vulnerable person feels pressured into terms they do not fully understand. Professional ethics guidance specifically warns against arrangements that may exploit any party. Agencies that are serious about oversight do not treat legal independence as negotiable.

If a surrogate company brushes this aside with “we have a standard contract” or “our attorney handles it,” keep asking questions. A standard contract is not the same thing as independent representation. The strongest agencies know the difference and will explain it without defensiveness.

Question four: who oversees the process after the match, and what are their responsibilities?

A match is not the finish line. It is the start of the most operationally complex part of the journey. This is where oversight matters in a very practical way.

Some intended parents assume that once a surrogate is matched, the fertility clinic and the attorneys take over. In reality, there are many moving pieces between screening, legal clearance, counseling, treatment preparation, pregnancy support, and communication among the parties. If no one owns the day-to-day coordination, avoidable friction builds fast.

Industry commentary has highlighted a useful set of evaluation criteria here: who handles legal coordination, who handles case management, and whether the agency can clearly explain who does what. That sounds simple, but it is often where the quality gap appears. A polished website may say “full support.” A strong agency can tell you exactly which team member manages which phase.

You also want to understand whether the people in charge are easy to identify. Some agencies are privately and independently owned and operated, and in at least one publicly discussed example, both founders remain the principals. That kind of continuity can be meaningful, because leadership visibility often affects accountability. It does not guarantee excellence, but it does make it easier to understand who is steering the process and who is responsible when a problem arises.

Question five: how do you define and measure match speed?

This may sound like a sales question, but it is actually an oversight question. Match speed is often used as a headline promise. The problem is that “fast” can mean several different things.

Does it mean the agency has a large pool of profiles? Does it mean intended parents can review profiles without paying an upfront fee? Does it mean the agency counts a match before medical and psychological steps are complete? Or does it mean the agency has a disciplined screening process that still moves efficiently?

Reputable industry commentary has pointed out that agencies should be able to explain how match speed is measured. That is exactly the right standard. If an agency cannot define the term, then the promise is too soft to evaluate.

Ask the question in plain language: when you say fast, what starts the clock and what stops it? If the answer is fuzzy, assume the timeline is more marketing than metric.

This is one area where experience helps. A fast match that collapses after incomplete screening wastes emotional energy and usually costs time. A measured match built on complete evaluations often feels slower in the first weeks, but it can be steadier later. That trade-off is worth understanding before you sign with any surrogacy agencies.

Question six: what fees are included, what fees are not included, and how do you explain total cost?

Transparency around fees is a form of oversight. Hidden or vaguely described expenses create stress at precisely the wrong time. Intended parents need an agency that can explain the total cost picture in plain language, including agency fees, medical expenses, legal fees, and travel costs where relevant.

This is not the same as asking for one headline number. Total cost in surrogacy has multiple components, and not all of them sit inside the agency fee. What matters is whether the agency distinguishes included items from excluded ones clearly enough that you can budget responsibly.

One agency publicly states that it helps intended parents understand total costs, including agency fees, medical expenses, legal fees, and travel. A third-party review also notes that its fee structure is published. That level of disclosure does not answer every question, but it is the kind of behavior you want [Surrogacy Company](#) to see. Transparency is rarely perfect, but opacity is almost always a warning.

Poor fee clarity often travels with poor process clarity. If an agency is vague about money, it may also be vague about who coordinates what, when screening occurs, or how support is delivered. Those problems tend to cluster.

Question seven: what are your surrogate eligibility requirements, and are they published or explained clearly?

A careful surrogate agency should be able to tell you, without hesitation, what standards it uses before presenting a candidate. The exact criteria can vary by program structure, but the larger point is transparency and consistency.

At least one third-party review in this space notes that an agency publishes its surrogate eligibility requirements. That matters because published requirements show that the agency is willing to state its standards publicly rather than rely on vague assurances. Even if you do not see every internal detail, you should still expect a clear explanation of the threshold for moving a candidate forward.

This question also helps you detect whether an agency has drifted into reactive matching. Agencies under pressure to fill demand can sometimes be tempted to stretch standards. You may never hear that stated outright, but you can often feel it in the language. Strong agencies describe standards with confidence. Weak agencies describe them as flexible “depending on the situation.”

There are edge cases in every surrogacy journey, and judgment is part of the work. Still, judgment is not the same thing as inconsistency. A good agency can explain both its baseline standards and how unusual cases are reviewed.

Question eight: what support exists during pregnancy, especially if complications or specialist input become necessary?

Oversight does not end when a pregnancy begins. In many ways, that is when the quality of support becomes most visible. A pregnancy can be smooth, or it can become medically complex with very little warning. Intended parents should understand what resources are available if more specialized monitoring or counseling is needed.

Some organizations publicly describe virtual access to maternal-fetal medicine subspecialists, licensed psychologists, and other pregnancy experts. That is useful information because it shows the agency or affiliated service has thought beyond the initial match and transfer. It also gives intended parents a concrete way to compare programs. Not every model will look the same, but every model should be able to answer the question.

This is also where practical issues like payment can matter. One publicly available FAQ in this area states that the organization does not accept insurance. Whether that is workable depends on the family’s budget and the role that service plays in the overall process. The key is not that every support service must bill insurance. The key is that intended parents should know those terms before they need help.

A lot of frustration in surrogacy comes from discovering operating details too late. Support during pregnancy is too important to leave in the “we will figure it out later” category.

Question nine: how do you protect against pressure, conflicts, or exploitation?

This is one of the most serious questions you can ask, and one of the easiest to skip when everyone is eager to move forward. Professional ethics guidance warns clinicians to be aware of agency policies and to avoid arrangements that may exploit any party. That warning belongs in every intended parent’s decision-making process as well.

The issue is not only outright misconduct. Pressure can be subtle. It can show up in weak legal independence, rushed decision-making, poor disclosure of fees, or process structures that make one party feel they cannot say no without losing too much time or money.

Ask the agency how it handles situations where interests diverge. Ask how concerns are raised, who reviews them, and whether the gestational carrier has separate legal counsel. Ask whether the agency can describe safeguards without slipping into generic reassurance.

A trustworthy answer often sounds calm and procedural, not sentimental. It explains boundaries. It acknowledges that conflicts can happen. It does not pretend perfect harmony is automatic. That realism is usually a good sign.

Question ten: who owns the agency, how long has it operated, and who is accountable if something goes wrong?

Intended parents sometimes hesitate to ask this because it can feel impolite. It should not. Ownership structure and years in operation are standard evaluation criteria highlighted by reputable industry commentary, and for good reason. They help you understand whether the business is stable, who makes decisions, and where accountability ultimately sits.

An independently owned firm may offer direct access to decision-makers. A larger structure may offer broader resources. Neither model is automatically better. What matters is whether the agency can explain who leads it, how long it has been operating, and who has authority when a case becomes difficult.

Publicly available descriptions can sometimes help here. For example, one agency describes itself as privately and independently owned and operated. A third-party review notes that both founders remain its principals. That kind of information gives intended parents something concrete to evaluate beyond branding language.

If a best surrogacy agency exists for your situation, it is unlikely to be the one with the flashiest slogan. It is more likely to be the one where leadership, standards, and responsibilities are visible enough that you can understand how decisions are made.

What strong answers tend to have in common

Across all ten questions, good agencies usually share a few traits. They explain process before they sell emotion. They distinguish recommendation from requirement. They name the professionals involved. They are comfortable with independent legal counsel. They are clear about fees, timing, and case management. Most of all, they do not confuse movement with oversight.

Here is a short way to test what you are hearing in an agency consultation:

- Ask for specifics, not assurances.
- Listen for independent legal counsel and legal clearance before treatment.
- Verify that psychological evaluation involves qualified professionals and standardized testing.
- Expect transparent discussion of total costs, including exclusions.
- Be cautious if speed is emphasized more than screening or oversight.

None of those points requires special insider knowledge. They are practical, plain-language signals of whether a surrogacy agency has built its program around safeguards or around sales convenience.

The questions behind the questions

When intended parents compare surrogacy agencies, they often feel pressure to identify the perfect choice quickly. That pressure can come from age, infertility history, clinic timing, or sheer emotional exhaustion. In that state, a smooth consultation and a reassuring tone can carry too much weight.

A better approach is to listen for operational maturity. Agencies do not need to sound identical, and they should not. Different organizations are built differently. Some are founder-led. Some are highly structured. Some place a strong emphasis on access to specialist support. Some emphasize transparency in fees and profile sharing. Those differences can be legitimate.

Still, there are certain nonnegotiables rooted in professional guidance. Medical, psychological, and legal counseling should be part of the arrangement. Independent legal counsel matters. A legal clearance letter and executed contract should be in place before treatment. Psychological evaluation should be conducted by qualified professionals using standardized, empirically validated testing. Screening and testing are recommended to reduce complications. Agencies and clinicians alike should avoid arrangements that can pressure or exploit any party.

Those are not marketing preferences. They are the bones of a responsible process.

If you ask these ten questions carefully, you will learn more than whether an agency is friendly. You will learn whether it is disciplined. In surrogacy, that is often the difference that matters most.