



# KEELY A. SEAVERSON

## *Advancing the Rights of Women and Families*

By Haley Freeman

*The law and family have always gone hand-in-hand in the life of Keely Seaverson. For many years, her attorney, single father, Steven Snyder, ran his law practice from home so he could spend more time with his two children. Seaverson remembered, "It was interesting for me in terms of seeing his work and hearing him talking to clients. I would come home from school and sit across the desk from him, waiting for him to get off the phone so I could tell him about my day."*



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Snyder’s law practice evolved over time from family law to one dedicated entirely to assisted reproductive technology law, helping clients who need third-party assistance such as surrogacy, egg donation or sperm donation to have a family.

Like many young people, Seaverson attended college eager to assert her independence, and she didn’t see herself following in her father’s footsteps to a career in law. While earning her undergraduate degree, she began working at Snyder’s related surrogacy and egg donation agency.

“My job was educating and screening women who wanted to be surrogates and egg donors. It turned into a full-time job for me. By the time I was out of college, I had developed a passion for this work, and I saw law school as the natural next step to have the complete knowledge and skills necessary to help our clients.”

Seaverson earned her law degree from Hamline University School of Law and joined her father at Steven H. Snyder & Associates, where together they are guiding people on their journey to becoming a family.

“A big focus for both my dad and me is education. Before clients hire us, we educate them about the different steps of the process, the legal services and other support they should have, and the best order to do things. Once they get started, my job is to be here for them in whatever way they need. In addition to negotiating the contract between the intended parents and the surrogate, there may be questions about the surrogate’s medical insurance, the relationship with the medical clinic, or the psychological evaluation component. Having a full background working with clients from start to finish gives me a wide and deep set of knowledge to help our law firm clients.”

While Seaverson was well-prepared for the rigors of assisted reproductive technology law, she also had to adapt from her prior mediatory role to being an advocate for one party. However, her comprehensive experience has proven a tremendous asset when challenges arise in a negotiation.

“When people get hung up, I try to come from an educator’s perspective. These are emotional issues, and I can help them consider all their options clearly. Having seen the outcome of many cases, I counsel

people to keep the bigger picture in mind. Everyone’s goal is to reach a successful negotiation and maintain a positive relationship as they start this life-changing process together.”

In this highly consultative relationship, Seaverson and Snyder provide services on a flat fee model and are assisted by a large and highly skilled staff. “We give it our all to make sure our clients are getting what they need, no matter how much time it takes. Our way of giving back as a firm is to provide reduced fee and even no-cost services to those who need it. We try to help as many families as possible.”

Seaverson and Snyder are foremost educators in matters relating to assisted reproductive technology. They travel domestically and internationally speaking on the social and legal complexities of surrogacy and advancing the rights of women and intended parents. Since there are no laws regulating surrogacy in Minnesota, Seaverson and Snyder are also regular visitors at the State Capitol.

“We would like to see legislation requiring very basic screening and procedural requirements to avoid disputes. For example, each party should have an independent attorney, there should be a clear contract in place, and there should be a minimum age requirement and psychological evaluation for the parties. We’re fortunate that this is an area of law where disputes are very rare – less than half of 1 percent. In large part, it is because most of the professionals involved in the process are acting ethically and cautiously to make sure safeguards are there. It is already a very controlled and positive process that would become more so if states allowed this legislation to go through.”

Compensated pregnancy is looked at differently in cultures around the world, and the United States is at the forefront of social change. In many countries, especially in Europe, strong concerns about exploiting and commodifying women have prevented people with fertility challenges from becoming parents.

Seaverson presented a different view: “What we do is incredibly special. There are all these stereotypes about surrogates being unintelligent and low income – a breeder class. We see quite the opposite. These are strong, altruistic, amazing women, and we

are committed to making sure this process remains available to them. These are people who want to give the precious gift of a child to another family.”

The Internet and social media have helped these extraordinary women to connect, unite and make their voices heard. “They have started organizing into different support and social groups and setting their own rules for the process. They’re very vertically thinking. One thing that has come out of that is the trend of surrogates wanting to only carry singleton pregnancies. When I started, there were a lot of twin pregnancies. Now, women are talking online about the risks and changing the rules to reflect what is most comfortable for them. For a long time, we’ve been recommending singleton pregnancies to address these concerns. It’s important these women have full control over for their health and well-being.”

Last year, Seaverson and her husband welcomed their first baby.

“I’ve always heard my dad say, ‘The reason I do what I do is because of the love I have for my own children. I want other people to have that love.’ I could always imagine what it would feel like, but now I really know. This is an area of law where you really have to care and empathize with what people are going through. Being a family and helping other families through this process is really special.”



Seaverson with her father and managing partner of Steven H. Snyder & Associates

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