Surrogacy agencies aren’t regulated, and it can be hard to distinguish the reputable firms from the scams. In 2011, for example, the FBI busted a baby-selling ring led in part by Hilary Neiman, a Chevy Chase resident who founded Rockville’s now-defunct National Adoption and Surrogacy Center. The leaders of the ring had flown surrogates to the Ukraine for insemination and, when the pregnancies reached the second trimester, offered the babies to prospective parents for more than $100,000 each, according to the FBI.

To avoid these types of scams, experts say you should ask to speak with current and former clients. “If they don’t let you do that, that’s a huge alarm bell,” says Diane Hinson, founder of Creative Family Connections in Chevy Chase. Also ask how many cases they’ve handled. Hinson advises against using firms that have a financial interest in another business entity, such as a particular fertility clinic or insurance company.

Another red flag: any company that says it’s okay for the same attorney to represent both the intended parents and the surrogate. Each should have a separate lawyer. (You can also find a surrogate without using an agency and hire lawyers to handle the contract.)
Before signing on with an agency, you should have a face-to-face meeting, even if by video conference. Ask the agency staff to describe a situation in which a match didn’t turn out well for the intended parents and what the agency did about it. Also ask how they screen surrogates and how often candidates are declined.

Intended parents can pay as much as $100,000 for the entire process when using their own eggs, or up to $130,000 when using an egg donor, depending on the fertility clinic and the number of IVF cycles necessary. On top of the surrogate’s compensation, the cost might include a $20,000 agency fee, at least $15,000 for an IVF transfer, and several thousand dollars’ worth of medical and legal fees, travel, and perhaps lost wages and child-care expenses.

Respected agencies select candidates who are emotionally and financially stable, with at least one spouse gainfully employed. They can’t be on welfare, in the middle of a divorce, or offered so much money that the situation could be considered coercive.

Surrogates are required to have had at least one healthy pregnancy and delivery, and they should be finished having their own children. Most agencies have an age cutoff between 42 and 45.

Agencies should spell out in advance what happens if clients aren’t happy with their surrogate or if they change their minds during fertility treatments, before the pregnancy begins. Reputable agencies should refund the money that the agency and surrogate have not yet earned.

Here are the major agencies in this region:

**ARTparenting**, 1004 Willowleaf Way, Potomac; 301-217-0074.

**Center for Surrogate Parenting**, 9 State Cir., Suite 302, Annapolis; 410-990-9860.

**Creative Family Connections**, 2 Wisconsin Cir., Suite 700, Chevy Chase; 240-235-6006.

**Reproductive Possibilities**, One Paragon Dr., Suite 160, Montvale, N.J.; 201-505-0078.

Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak & Stone Crab brings Miami to DC. Read the full review: [bit.ly/1l2l4A2](https://bit.ly/1l2l4A2)

Edens, the development firm that built Union Market, wants to build apartments and retail nearby: [bit.ly/1fZiw7c](https://bit.ly/1fZiw7c)

Finalist announced for Loeb Awards comp: @AlexndraRobbins @washingtonian for "Children Are Dying" in Magazines [prn.to/1mGcPtd](http://prn.to/1mGcPtd)

Sweetlife is sold out, but there are plenty of other options.

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Fellow Bath Countian — As someone who grew up in the small town described above, it is needless to say ...

Vicki V — Thanks, everyone for all the nice comments!

Vicki Ferrara — Attorney Vicki Ferrara owner and legal director of Worldwide Surrogacy Specialists [http://www.assistedreproductio...](http://www.assistedreproductio...) will be one of the guest speakers for the 9th Annual Men Having Babies at JCC in Manhattan. This event is an excellent way to learn everything you need to know about the Surrogacy journey...

Register online at: [http://www.menhavingbabies.org...](http://www.menhavingbabies.org...)

Barrie — This is a great story and reads very true. There are lots of scams out there right now and lots of FBI investigations on-going. Please be safe with your money guys and think about the fantastic job the surrogate does for you for the whole period and beyond.

if you need advice on Surrogacy then may i make a suggestion and pass on the details for he British Surrogacy Center of California. [http://www.bsc-america.com/](http://www.bsc-america.com/)

To be frank me and my wife went around many agencies but at last we are successful at wee care surrogacy (yashoda hospital)