

What is paternity establishment?

Paternity means legal fatherhood. Paternity establishment is how a biological father becomes the legal father of his child if he and the mother are not married.

If a child's parents are not married to each other when the child is born, that child does not have a legal father. The parents need to establish paternity.

Why should I establish paternity?

Establishing paternity can provide legal, emotional, social, and economic ties between a parent and child.

How does the biological, or natural, father become the legal father?

For unmarried parents in Ohio, paternity can be established by completing and signing an Acknowledgement of Paternity Affidavit, genetic testing followed by an administrative order of paternity at your local child support enforcement agency (CSEA) or a court order of paternity.

What is the Acknowledgment of Paternity Affidavit?

If unmarried, and both parties agree they are the biological parents of the child, the "Acknowledgment of Paternity Affidavit (JFS 07038)" can be completed. By signing the form, parents are establishing paternity for their child - meaning legally recognized fatherhood. Completing the form is voluntary, it's free, and is the quickest way to establish paternity.



What if we are not sure who the natural father is?

Only the natural parents should sign the affidavit. If you are not sure who the natural father is, don't sign. Establishing paternity by DNA testing might be a better option for you. Contact your local child support enforcement agency (CSEA) for more information.

Who should NOT complete the affidavit?

- A married mother
- A mother divorced within 300 days of the child's birth
- A mother who is legally separated from her husband

There are other unique circumstances that may prevent an individual from using the affidavit to establish paternity. If you are unsure, please contact your local CSEA.

Where do I get the affidavit?

- At the hospital when your baby is born
- At your local registrar's office (also called Vital Statistics or the Health Department) after your baby is born
- At your local CSEA after your baby is born
- By calling the Ohio Central Paternity Registry (CPR) at 1-888-810-OHIO (6446) and requesting a copy be mailed to you

What do I do with the affidavit to make it official?

Both parents must sign the affidavit in the presence of a public notary and have the affidavit notarized, but they don't have to sign it at the same time. Notaries are provided free of charge at hospitals, local registrars and local CSEAs. Each parent will need a picture ID (such as a driver's license) and Social Security number (if they have one).

Can minors sign the affidavit?

Yes, minors can sign the affidavit.

Can non-U.S. citizens sign the affidavit?

Yes. Regardless of a parent's citizenship, if a child was born in Ohio or one or both parents live in Ohio, paternity can be established. The affidavit is not used to track non-U.S. citizens.

When does the affidavit become final?

The affidavit is final 60 days after the date of the last signature, as long as no one else raises the issue of paternity and the affidavit is properly signed, notarized and filed with the Central Paternity Registry.

What if I change my mind after signing the affidavit?

Either parent can stop the process anytime within 60 days of signing it by contacting their local CSEA. For more information please see the FAQ at www.oh-paternity.com.

If the man signs the affidavit, will he be required to pay child support?

It depends. Both parents have a responsibility to support their child. If the child is receiving certain benefits, the father may be required to pay child support. Contact your local CSEA to discuss your situation and get specific answers.

How are custody and visitation determined?

Paternity establishment and custody are two separate issues. If the mother is unmarried at the time of the child's birth, she automatically has legal custody of the child. Once paternity is established, the father may seek visitation or custody rights through the court system.



Benefits of Establishing Paternity

Identity

- Allows both mother and father to develop an emotional bond with their child and share in the responsibilities
- Father's name will appear on the child's birth certificate gaining legal rights to his child.

Custody and Visitation

- Once paternity is established, the father may seek visitation or custody rights through the court system.

Financial

- The child may have access to benefits such as Social Security, life insurance, military benefits, inheritances and child support.

Medical

- The child will also have access to their father's health insurance as well as both families' medical histories and lineages.



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Paternity Establishment Program

To learn more about:

Establishing paternity

Frequently asked questions

Important contact information

If the affidavit is right for you

Please visit:

www.oh-paternity.com

or call:

1-888-810-OHIO (6446)



Mike DeWine, Governor
State of Ohio

Matt Damschroder, Interim Director
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

Office of Child Support

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**“What a
difference a
Dad makes!”**

***Information about the
Paternity Establishment Program
and the Acknowledgment of
Paternity Affidavit.***