

**To new Moms and Dads . . .**



**. . . help your baby  
get a step ahead in life!**

# **A Special Message to new MOMS:**

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Congratulations on the birth of your new baby. Be a proud parent and help your baby get a step ahead in life. You can make a difference. Start today by completing the

## ***Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form***

### **How will your baby benefit if you sign this *Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form*?**

- Your baby's birth certificate will show the names of both parents.
- Your baby will know who both his or her mother and father are.
- Your baby will be entitled to financial support from both parents until he or she becomes an adult.
- Your baby's doctors will be able to learn both parents' family medical histories for such things as cancer, diabetes, and sickle cell.
- Your baby may benefit from both parents' health insurance, Social Security, pension, and inheritance.

# **A Special Message to new DADS:**

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Congratulations on the birth of your new baby. Be a proud parent and help your baby get a step ahead in life. You can make a difference. Start today by completing the

## ***Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form***

### **How will your baby benefit if you sign this *Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form*?**

- Your name will be on your baby's birth certificate.
- Your baby will know you are his or her father.
- Your baby will be entitled to receive financial support from both parents until he or she becomes an adult.
- Your baby's doctors will be able to learn your family's medical history for such things as cancer, diabetes, and sickle cell.
- Your baby may benefit from your health insurance, Social Security, pension, and inheritance.

If this form is filed, you have a greater chance to be a part of your child's life, and your parental rights have to be considered before your baby can be placed for adoption.

# **Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment - What it means**

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**Before signing** the *Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment* form, **make sure you understand** what the form means.

## **What does it mean if you sign this form?**

The *Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment* is the easiest way for an unmarried father to put his name on his baby's birth certificate. The other ways involve the courts. By signing the *Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment* form, both parents are establishing their baby's paternity. Paternity means legal fatherhood.

Signing this form legally establishes paternity. This means the court may order support for the baby without having a court hearing to prove who the father is. Support could include paying for medical bills and providing health insurance. Support is owed until the baby becomes an adult.

This form does **not** give the father legal custody (the legal right to make decisions for the baby) or physical placement (visitation). Under Wisconsin law, the unmarried mother has sole legal custody until a court orders otherwise. If the father and mother cannot agree on custody and placement, the father will need to get a court order. Both parents will then have to prepare a "Parenting Plan." The court will decide what is best for the child. Custody and placement issues can be discussed with your county's or tribe's family court counseling service.

## **What you need to know**

The *Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment* form is a **legal document**. **Do not sign** this form unless both of you are completely sure that the man signing the form is the biological father. If you are not sure, **first ask** your child support agency for genetic tests.

If you have any questions, talk to the person who gave you this folder, your local child support agency, a counselor, a caseworker, or an attorney, or call 1-888-643-7284 **before signing this form**.

**You may not use this form if the mother was married** at the time the child was conceived or born unless there is a court order stating that the husband is not the father. **You may not use this form if either parent is under the age of 18.**

**Please do not use** the *Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment* form if you think it is not in the best interest of your child to establish paternity.

# **How to fill out the *Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment Form***

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Complete a separate form for each baby. (For example, if you have twins, you need to fill out one form for each baby.) Use **black ink** and do not cross out or erase anything. If you make a mistake, start a new form.

## **Section I**

Fill in each item in this section.

Write in all names (first, middle, and last names) just as they are on the baby's birth certificate.

Don't forget the father's Social Security number.

## **Section II**

You do not have to change your baby's name. You can just check the **NO** box.

If you **want** to change your baby's name on the birth certificate, check the **YES** box **and write** in the baby's new name on the form.

## **Section III**

Each parent must sign this form in front of a Notary Public. A Notary is someone licensed by the state to witness signatures.

- Make sure a Notary Public signs and completes the Notary information on both the mother and father areas of this form.
- Each parent may sign the form at different times and in front of different Notaries.
- If you are **under 18 years old**, you must not sign this form.
- You will need to show the Notary some proof of identity.

Notaries can be found in banks, courthouses, and child support agencies. Hospitals also have Notaries.

Notaries are also listed in the *Yellow Pages*.

### **Mail the form to:**

Vital Records/VPA

PO Box 309

Madison, WI 53701-0309

Be sure to send a check or money order \* for the correct amount to file the form and the amount to get copies of the birth certificate. See the back of the Acknowledgment form for the list of fees. Make out your check or money order to **Vital Records**.

\* Some hospitals and a few child support agencies might be able to help parents pay for this fee.

## If you change your mind . . .

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**If you change your mind, you can withdraw the *Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form* if a court has not yet ruled on a family matter involving the father, mother, and child.**

Either the mother or the father may file a *Request to Withdraw Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form*. The *Request to Withdraw Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form* must be filed **within 60 days** of filing the *Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form* **but before** a court rules on a family matter involving the father, mother, and child.

If you were under 18 when signing the *Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form* and a court has not ordered child support, you may file the *Request to Withdraw Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form* within **60 days after turning 18**. (Since January 1, 2007, both parents must be 18 or older to sign the form.)

The *Request to Withdraw Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form* is available from the birth hospital, your local child support agency, and the state Office of Vital Records.

Check the *Request to Withdraw Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form* for information about:

- How to fill out the *Request to Withdraw form*
- What the fee is to file the *Request to Withdraw form*
- Where to mail the *Request to Withdraw form*

If you change your mind about using the *Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form* **after 60 days**, you need to ask the court to void the paternity. You might want to hire an attorney. You will need to prove that there was fraud, duress, or a serious mistake that caused you to sign the *Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form*.