Establishing Paternity

Help Your Baby get a Step Ahead in Life

If a baby’s parents are unmarried, they may sign a Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment (VPA) form to ensure that the father’s name is put on the birth certificate and make him the legal father.

The VPA is provided to new parents at the hospital when a baby is born. It is also available from a local child support agency, midwife, or county register of deeds offices. Both parents must be 18 or older to use this form.

The VPA must be notarized (witnessed); sign the form in front of a Notary Public. Hospitals may provide a notary and most banks and child support agencies also have notaries.

If you sign the VPA at the hospital, the staff will send the form to vital records. You may also mail it yourself. If you cannot afford the fee (listed on the form), tell the hospital or child support agency staff, assistance may be available.

Importance of Naming Dad on a Birth Certificate

It is important for a child to know who his or her mother and father are. Establishing paternity gives a baby the rights to:

- The father’s name listed on a birth certificate
- Knowledge of both parents
- Financial support from both parents
- Information on family medical history
- Access to health insurance, social security, and inheritance from both parents
- Tribal enrollment rights for Native Americans

Rights and responsibilities are listed on the VPA. Find more information about legal fatherhood and child support online at [https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cs/home](https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cs/home).

For more information or services, contact your local child support agency, listed online at [https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cs/agencylist](https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cs/agencylist).

DCF is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access this information in an alternate format, or need it translated to another language, please contact (608) 266-9909 or (800) 947-3529 WTRS (Toll Free).

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