

Establishing Paternity

Children need the support of both parents; give your baby the best chance in life by establishing paternity as soon as possible. Complete the Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgement (VPA) form, which allows parents to establish paternity without having to go to court.

Why is Paternity Important?

Establishing paternity gives a child:

- The father's name 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

Establishing Paternity by Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgement Form

The VPA form is a **legal document** that provides an unmarried father an opportunity to put his name on his child's birth certificate. By signing the VPA, both parents are legally establishing their child's paternity.

This form **does not** automatically give the father legal custody or placement of a child. Under Wisconsin law, the unmarried mother has sole legal custody until a court decides otherwise. Custody and placement services are available from a local court or attorney.

This form **does not** establish a child support obligation. In order to set a child support order, parents can contact a local child support agency or attorney.

If both parents **do not sign** the VPA, either parent may establish paternity through the courts. Contact a local child support agency or attorney for more information.

Do not sign the VPA unless both parents are sure 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 your local child support agency, an attorney, call the Paternity Acknowledgement Answer Line at 1-888-643-7284, or visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cs/paternity/establish> before signing this form.

Do not use this form if:

- The mother was married at the time the child was conceived or born
- Either parent is under the age of 18
- It is not in the child's best interest to establish paternity

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>.

For more information or services, contact your local child support agency <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cs/agencylist>.



About the Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgement Form

The VPA is available from local hospitals, local child support agencies, and a county Register of Deeds office. Each Parent must sign the VPA in front of a notary public, which can be found at hospitals, local child support agencies, banks, credit unions, and courthouses.

There is a fee to file the VPA form. Some hospitals and child support agencies might be able to help parents pay for the fee. See the back of the VPA form for a list of fees. Send a check or money order for the correct amount to file the form and to get copies of the birth certificate. Make your check or money order out to **State of Wisconsin Vital Records**.

Withdrawing Paternity Acknowledgement Form

Either parent may file a Request to Withdraw VPA form **within 60 days** of filing the VPA form (before a court rules on a paternity matter). There is a fee for withdrawing a VPA form.

The Request to Withdraw VPA form is available from the birth hospital, your local child support agency, and state office of vital records.



DCF is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call (608) 266-9909. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.