

Wisconsin's Paternal Interest Registry

What is the Wisconsin Paternal Interest Registry?

In Wisconsin, a parent must be notified before their parental rights to a child are terminated or their child is adopted. However, if the father is not married to the mother, has not acknowledged his paternity, or has not been found to be the father by a court, then it may be difficult to locate the father and give notice. The Wisconsin Paternal Interest Registry is a way for possible fathers to receive notice if their child is involved in a termination of parental rights or an adoption.

How to File a Declaration with the Paternal Interest Registry

If you believe that you are the father of a child, you may register with the Wisconsin Paternal Interest Registry by filling out a Declaration of Paternal Interest form (form No. DCF-F-CFS0019A-E). The form asks for your name, address, the name and last-known address of the mother, and the month and year of the birth or expected birth of the child. The form must be signed and verified under oath or affirmation before a notary public. If you are under 18 years of age, your parent or legal guardian must also sign the form.



You may obtain the Declaration of Paternal Interest Form at:
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/forms/doc/0019a.docx> or by contacting:

Wisconsin Paternal Interest Registry

WI Dept. of Children and Families

Division of Safety and Permanence

P.O. Box 8916

Madison, WI 53708-8916

(608) 266-8787

There is no fee for filing a declaration of paternal interest.

When to File a Declaration of Paternal Interest

A declaration must be filed:

- Either before the birth of the child, or
- within 14 days after the birth of the child, or
- If the possible father receives notice under Wis. Stats. s. 48.42(1g)(b) that the mother has identified him as the father, within 21 days after the date that the notice was mailed to the father

What Does It Mean to File with the Paternal Interest Registry?

If you properly file a declaration with the Paternal Interest Registry within the deadlines and requirements described above, and the child you have identified is involved in an adoption or termination of parental rights proceeding, you will be contacted before the action is completed. Filing a declaration does not establish

parental rights to the child. You will need to take further action to establish and protect your rights and responsibilities as a father or to relinquish your rights as a father.

Revoking a Declaration of Paternal Interest

If you have filed a declaration of paternal interest, you may revoke it at any time by submitting a statement that, to the best of your knowledge and belief you are not the father of the child, or that another person has been legally declared to be the father of the child. You can submit this statement to the address listed above. The statement must be signed and verified under oath or affirmation before a notary public. If you are under 18 years of age, your parent or legal guardian must also sign the form. You may obtain a Revocation Form at:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/forms/doc/0019b.docx>.



What If You Don't File with the Paternal Interest Registry?

If you do not file with the Paternal Interest Registry, you might not receive notice if a child you believe you are the father of is involved in a termination of parental rights action.

Who Can Access Information in the Paternal Interest Registry?

The Paternal Interest Registry is a confidential record. Information in the Registry may only be disclosed by order of a court or under the following exceptions: 1) when a declaration form is received, a copy will be sent to the mother at her last known address (the mother may respond in writing but is not required to do so.); and 2) individuals who are authorized to file various children's actions in court may also request that the Paternal Interest Registry be searched to determine if there is a registered possible father.

The Department will search its records and either provide a copy of the declaration form to the requesting party or will inform the requestor that no record exists. The information may only be used in the child's proceeding.

The Department of Children and Families' Bureau of Child Support or county child support agencies may not access information in the Paternal Interest Registry.

Penalties

A person making a false statement in a declaration, revocation or response to a declaration, that the person believes to be untrue, can be prosecuted.

Disclaimer

This information is not designed to be legal advice. Questions concerning paternity, presumption of paternity, or rights and responsibilities of a parent should be directed to an attorney.

The Department of Children and Families 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 the Division of Safety and Permanence at (608) 266-8787. 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.