

What is the Putative Father Registry?

The Putative Father Registry records the names and addresses of fathers (or men who believe they might be fathers) of children born outside of marriage.

Why should a man enter his name on the Putative Father Registry?

The Putative Father Registry allows a man to officially claim he is, or believes he might be, the father of a child. A man might want to do this before paternity is legally established if he cannot find the child's mother or if the mother does not want to establish paternity for the child.

The Putative Father Registry is used in adoption proceedings to identify the child's father and promptly secure his consent to proceed with the adoption. A man who is concerned that his child might be adopted without his consent should place his name on the Putative Father Registry before the child's birth, or within 15 days of the child's birth, in order to be notified of an adoption proceeding for the child.

A man can add his name to the Putative Father Registry by filing a *Notice of Intent to Claim Paternity* with the Bureau of Vital Records (BVR). Filing this notice does not establish legal paternity, but it does create an official record of the man's claim to be the father, or possible father, of a child.

A man can obtain a copy of the *Notice of Intent to Claim Paternity* on the Internet at www.health.mo.gov, or he may contact BVR directly at (573) 751-6387.



To obtain a copy of the *Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity* for completion, contact:

**Bureau of Vital Records
PO Box 570
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0570**



For more information about paternity, child support or paternity tests, contact:

**Family Support Division
PO Box 6790
Jefferson City, MO 65102-6790**

1-855-454-8037

www.dss.mo.gov/cse

TDD: 1-800-735-2966
VOICE: 1-800-735-2466

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
EMPLOYER
services provided on a nondiscriminatory basis

Does Your Child Have A Legal Father?



***Paternity information
for moms and dads***

What is paternity?

Paternity means fatherhood. A child whose parents are not married has no legal father. Paternity establishment is the process of making a man the legal father of his child.

What are the benefits of establishing paternity?

Once paternity is legally established, the father's name will be placed on the child's birth certificate. The parents will need the father listed on the birth certificate to enroll the child in the father's health insurance plan.

When paternity is legally established, the child will be eligible for Social Security and/or Veterans benefits should the father die or become disabled.

And, if necessary, both parents will be able to go to court for issues of custody, visitation and support.

How is paternity established?

The easiest way to establish paternity is for both parents to complete an *Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity* at the hospital when the baby is born. Hospital staff provide the affidavit to parents who are not married. When both parents complete the affidavit, the father's name is added to the child's birth certificate and he becomes the legal father. [If the hospital opportunity is missed, the affidavit may still be completed. Contact the Family Support Division (FSD) at the telephone

number or address on the back of this brochure.]

If there is uncertainty as to whether the man is the biological (natural) father, a paternity test should be done. In many situations, the tests can be provided by FSD.

Paternity testing (also known as DNA testing or genetic testing) involves a simple swipe of a cotton swab inside the cheek of the baby, mother and man. From the sample taken, a laboratory can provide results which show at least a 98 percent probability that the man is the father, a finding which by Missouri law indicates he is the presumed father.

Either the mother or the man who believes he might be the child's father may apply for paternity testing through FSD. The state of Missouri will pay for the test. An application for FSD services is available on the Internet at www.dss.mo.gov/cse or by contacting the telephone number or address on the back of this brochure.

BVR does not add the father to the child's birth certificate based only on paternity test results. Instead, the parents may complete the paternity affidavit or obtain a court order that directs BVR to update the child's birth record.

If either the mother or father do not agree to establish paternity, either parent may ask FSD for help. Either parent may also talk with a private attorney. When there is

disagreement, FSD or a court can order the paternity test at the request of a parent or the child's custodian. Once the test results are obtained, FSD or the court may enter an order establishing paternity and child support.

What last name goes on the child's birth certificate?

When a baby is born to an unmarried mother, the mother can give the child a last name she chooses. Usually, when the parents agree who the father is, they will agree on a last name. This is easiest to do at the hospital when the child is born. If paternity is established after the mother leaves the hospital, the child's last name may be changed when completing the *Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity*. If the parents decide to change the last name after the father's name is added to the birth certificate, a court order is required.

How long after a child is born can paternity be established?

Parents can voluntarily establish paternity by completing the *Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity* any time after their child's birth, regardless of the child's age. If the parents do not agree to establish paternity, either can bring an action — through FSD or the court — to establish paternity any time before the child's 18th birthday. Children may also bring an action to establish paternity for themselves between the ages of 18 and 21.

Does paternity establishment give a father rights to custody and visitation?

The father and mother may agree on custody and visitation without court involvement. If they don't agree, a court must settle the matter.

Will one of the parents have to pay support?

When parents voluntarily sign the *Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity*, there is no order for support or medical coverage. FSD or a court can enter an order for support at the request of a parent or the child's custodian. The parent who does not live with the child is usually required to provide financial and medical support. State guidelines are used to set the amount of support, based on the incomes of both parents.