

# GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

## OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL



## ESTABLISH PATERNITY FOR YOUR CHILD

### CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION

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[www.cssd.dc.gov](http://www.cssd.dc.gov)

## PATERNITY ESTABLISHMENT

In the District of Columbia, when a child is born to unmarried parents, there is no automatic legal relationship between the father and the child. The biological father's name will not be placed on the birth certificate without filling out an Acknowledgement of Paternity (AOP). This is called paternity establishment and establishes the biological father as the legal father.



## HOW TO ESTABLISH PATERNITY

### 1. Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity

A mother and father can voluntarily sign an AOP form. Establishing paternity is easy and free! The process is available to parents if the mother was not married at the time of birth, conception or any-time in between. If both parents complete the AOP form, they don't have to go to court to establish paternity.

- Both parents must swear the information on the AOP form is true.
- The father must provide photo identification.
- No blood test is required.

## Continued

- Signing an AOP is easy and free.
- Both parents must sign the AOP before the mother and baby leave the hospital.
- AOP forms are available in Hospitals, Birthing Centers or The Department of Health and Vital Records. Each facility can help you complete the form.

### 2. Child Support Services Division (CSSD) can help parents establish paternity.

- **Filing a Petition** - If the man you suspect to be your child's father disputes that he is the father you can establish paternity through CSSD. The Child Support office can help you file a petition with D.C. Superior Court. This petition will name the man you suspect is your child's biological father and request a child support order.



- **Court Hearing** - The D.C. Superior Court will hold a hearing, which the mother and potential father must attend. At this hearing, the man has a chance to admit if he is the child's biological father.

### Continued

- **Genetic Testing** - If the man named as the child's father is not sure if he is the father, or denies that he is, the court may order a genetic test. If the test proves he is the child's father, the court will issue an order that establishes the child's paternity. This order is legal proof establishing your child's paternity.

### TANF RECIPIENTS

District of Columbia law requires Temporary Aid to Need Families (TANF) customers to establish paternity, unless there is a "Good Cause" for not doing so. If you receive TANF benefits, or are seeking a child support order, you must contact CSSD.

### WHY IS ESTABLISHING PATERNITY IMPORTANT

- **Legal Bond** - It creates a legal bond between father and child.
- **Responsible adults** - Children with a father figure are more likely to stay in school, avoid drugs and crime, and become responsible adults.



### Continued



- **Child Support** - Your child's father may be required by a court to pay child support and provide health insurance coverage for your child.
- **Birth Certificate** - Paternity must be established before your child's birth certificate will show the name of the father.
- **Social Security Benefits** - Your child maybe eligible for Social Security benefits if the father becomes disabled or is deceased.
- **Life Insurance** - Your child may be entitled to his or her father's life insurance benefits.
- **Inheritance** - Your child may share a right to inherit property from his or her father's estate.
- **Medical History** - Children have access to their father's medical history.

### Continued

- **Military Benefits** - Your child may be eligible for medical coverage and life insurance benefits if his or her father currently works or previously worked for the military.

### RESCINDING YOUR AOP

Either parent may rescind the AOP by completing a form and filing it with the Office of Vital Records within 60 days from the date of the last notarized signature. Rescission forms are available at the Department of Health Vital Records Office.

### QUESTIONS



If you need to locate your child's father, or have questions about establishing paternity, please contact your local Department of Health Vital Records office or the Office of the Attorney General, Child Support Services Division, Customer Service Unit at (202) 442-9900.

Usted puede solicitar **totalmente gratis** servicios de interpretación por teléfono o en persona, así como pedir que se le traduzcan algunos documentos. Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre este documento, por favor llámenos al (202) 442-9900.