



### **Paternity establishment is important.**

All unmarried parents should think about establishing paternity — because all kids deserve the benefits that legal fatherhood can provide. If you're not married when your child is born, your child does not have a legal father.

Unless a man legally establishes fatherhood, his child may miss out on many of the things that kids of married couples take for granted. The child may not receive the benefits that come with having two legal parents — like Social Security, health insurance, and inheritance rights. The father's name won't even appear on the child's birth certificate.

Legal parents have a right to have a relationship with their child and to visit their child. Once a man establishes paternity, he gains these rights. If parents can't agree on visitation or custody, a court can help.

### **What is paternity establishment?**

Paternity means legal fatherhood. Paternity establishment is how a biological father legally becomes the father of his child if he and the mother are not married. For unmarried parents, paternity must be established before the father's name can appear on the birth certificate.

### **Is paternity establishment easy?**

Yes! The paternity establishment process is easy and can be done free of charge at the hospital when the child is born (it will all be explained as parents complete their child's birth certificate).

By taking this important step, unmarried parents give their child a father right from the start. To establish paternity, each parent must simply show a valid government-issued photo ID, then complete and sign their section of the Acknowledgment of Paternity Affidavit (AOP) form in front of a notary public.

Accepted forms of ID include: driver's license, state ID card, consular ID card or other government-issued, valid identification from country of origin. For more information on forms of ID, contact your birthing facility.

Parents can also fill out an AOP form later, for a small fee, at the vital records office in New Orleans or by mail.

### **What if parents establish paternity but change their minds later?**

Parents should think carefully before establishing paternity. If they do change their minds, they have 60 days to rescind (cancel) the establishment.

### **What if a woman is married and her husband is not the father?**

By Louisiana law, if the mother is married to someone other than the biological father or has been divorced for less than 300 days at the time of birth, a 3-party AOP form can be completed. The form requires the agreement of all parties involved — including the mother, the husband/ex-husband, and the biological father — along with a DNA-based paternity test that shows the identity of the biological father with at least 99.9 percent probability.



### **What if parents aren't sure who the father is?**

A genetic test, also called a DNA test, can help determine whether a man is the father. A child support office or private attorney can give you more information.

### **Can non-U.S. residents sign the AOP form?**

Yes. Regardless of a parent's citizenship, they can establish paternity for their child, who is a U.S. citizen. This form is not used to track non-U.S. residents.

### **How are custody and visitation determined?**

Paternity establishment and custody are two separate issues. Under most circumstances, when a child is born to unmarried parents, the child lives with the mother and she maintains physical custody. Once paternity is established, the father may seek visitation rights through the court system.

### **Will the father be required to pay child support if he signs the AOP form?**

No. The father is not immediately ordered to pay child support. In most cases, it will be up to the guardian of the child to request support. However, if the child or guardian is receiving certain benefits provided for the medical or financial care of that child, a father may be required to pay child support. If you have specific questions about your situation, please contact **child support enforcement** at **1.888.524.3578 / 1.888.LAHELPU**, TTY 225.922.8111, or visit the website at **dss.louisiana.gov**.

## Legally establishing fatherhood benefits everyone involved.

### It helps children...

- Form a relationship with both parents
- Develop a sense of identity
- Know about both families' medical histories
- Get access to health insurance and benefits like Social Security and inheritances
- Stay away from high-risk behaviors



# “WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAD MAKES!”



### It helps mothers...

- Get help with responsibilities and decisions
- Share the joys of being a parent
- Divide the costs of bringing up the child

### It helps fathers...

- Get legal rights to have a relationship with their child
- Create an emotional bond with their child and be a part of their life
- Share their side of the family with their child
- Ask the court to assist with visitation and custody matters

## “WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAD MAKES!”

For more information about  
**establishing paternity**  
**225.330.4422**  
**866.430.9569**

[new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/681](http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/681)

For more information about  
**birth certificates**  
**504.593.5122**

[new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/634](http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/634)



Louisiana

**Paternity Establishment Program**

A program of the Department of  
Children & Family Services



[LA-paternity.com](http://LA-paternity.com)



Louisiana  
Paternity Establishment Program

**Important information  
for unmarried parents.**

[LA-paternity.com](http://LA-paternity.com)