



TO FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION OR TO APPLY  
FOR CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES:

Contact your local DCSE office  
Toll-Free: 1-800-468-8894  
(M-F, 7 a.m.-6 p.m.)  
or visit their website at  
[www.dss.virginia.gov/family/dcse](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/dcse)

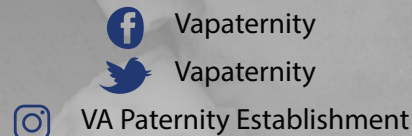
The Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) is not involved with the family unless one parent applies for services. If one parent is not sharing the responsibility for supporting the child, the other parent may apply to the Division of Child Support Enforcement for assistance. Applications are available on the website.

For Information About Paternity Establishment,  
Contact:

Virginia Paternity Establishment Program  
Local Phone: 804-285-5826  
Toll-Free Phone: 1-866-398-4841  
Email: [vapep@veritas-hhs.com](mailto:vapep@veritas-hhs.com)  
Website: [www.vapaternity.com](http://www.vapaternity.com)

Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 8270  
Richmond, VA 23226

Find us on



Parents, we'd appreciate if you'd take a minute to share your experience. Completing the survey will enter you into a drawing for a package of diapers!

[www.surveymonkey.com/r/vapaternityparentsurvey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/vapaternityparentsurvey.com)



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL SERVICES

Toll-Free: 1-800-468-8894  
(M-F, 7 a.m.-6 p.m.)  
[www.dss.virginia.gov/family/dcse](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/dcse)



## Did you know?

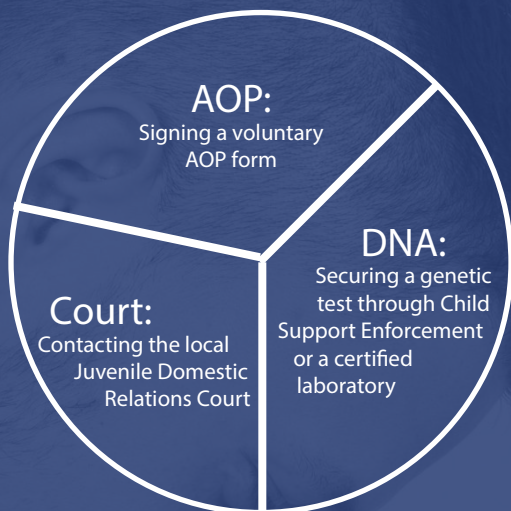
- In the Commonwealth of Virginia, if parents are not legally married at the time of birth, the father's name will not appear on the child's birth certificate unless paternity is established.
- If parents are not legally married at the time of birth, they can establish paternity by signing an Acknowledgment of Paternity (AOP) form as part of the birth registration process or at a later time.
- In order to be recognized as the child's legal father and have rights, the biological father must establish paternity.
- Being the legal father of your child does not mean that you will be required to pay child support, have custody or even visitation. These are separate issues and require court determinations.



## Q: What is paternity establishment?

A: Paternity means legal fatherhood. Establishing paternity is the process where an unmarried biological father becomes the legal father of his child. Unmarried parents can establish paternity at the hospital after the birth of their child as part of the birth registration process.

### Establish Paternity By:



## Q: How do I establish paternity through a voluntary process?

A: It's simple! If you were unmarried from conception to birth, the mother and father can sign a document called an Acknowledgment of Paternity (AOP) stating the father is the biological parent. The parents must provide a photo ID and sign in the presence of a Notary.

## Q: How does establishing paternity affect my child's birth certificate?

A: If you are unmarried at the time of your child's birth, the father's name will not be included on the child's birth certificate without paternity being established. The Division of Vital Records is available to answer any questions you have about the birth certificate process. Please feel free to contact them at 804-662-6200.

## Q: How much does it cost?

A: It's free if you complete the AOP in the hospital after your child's birth. If you are unable to complete the AOP at the time of birth, you may return to the hospital at a later date or you may contact the Division of Vital Records (DVR), the Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE), or the local Department of Health (DOH) to complete an AOP. You may also mail your completed AOP directly to our office at P.O. Box 8270 Richmond, VA 23226. The Division of Vital Records will charge a \$10 fee to amend the birth certificate if the AOP is completed after the birth registration has occurred and \$12 for each copy of the birth certificate. These fees will be collected prior to issuing the birth certificate with the father's name—so be sure to save time and money by completing the form at the hospital if possible!

## Q: What are my responsibilities if I establish paternity?

A: Each parent must understand the Rights and Responsibilities associated with establishing paternity. This information is specified on the AOP form. Please review the Rights and Responsibilities carefully before signing the document.

## Q: What if one of the parents change their mind after signing the form?

A: Parents should think carefully before establishing paternity. If you do change your mind, you have 60 days from the last notarized signature date to rescind the AOP. Either parent may cancel or "rescind" the AOP by completing a rescission form at the Division of Vital Records or a local Department of Health.

## Q: How does establishing paternity help my child?

The greatest statistical indicator of whether or not an unmarried dad will be involved in his child's life is whether or not he establishes paternity. Give your child the advantage of having a father right from the start!

### 1 Self Esteem

Children respond better to love and support from both parents. They gain a sense of belonging and benefit from knowing that both of their parents care for them.

### 2 Family Identity

When children know they are part of a family, they are likely to be more secure about who they are. Establishing paternity identifies the father's side of the family and encourages relationships with his family.

### 3 Shared Parenting

Parenting is the responsibility of both the father and the mother. (Studies show that this results in a decrease in high-risk behavior by the child). Finally, more resources are available when both parents share the responsibility of raising their child.

### 4 Health History

A child is more likely to have a complete health history if paternity is established. Knowing the family's medical history is important for children and their physicians. Additionally, a health history is critically important if there are conditions that may present any special health problems (disease, genetic traits, and donor information for transplant).

### 5 Important Rights

When paternity is established, the child has the same rights as a child born in a marriage. When a father dies or is permanently disabled, having a legal father ensures benefits for the child (medical or insurance benefits, inheritance, Social Security, disability or veteran's benefits).

## Q: What if we're not sure about who the father is?

A: Genetic testing can help you determine whether a man is a child's biological father. Call the Virginia Paternity Establishment Program toll free at 1-866-398-4841 to receive information on a low-cost genetic test through the Division of Child Support Enforcement. You may also contact one of the following private laboratories:

**LabCorp**  
1-800-742-3944  
[www.LapCorpDNA.com](http://www.LapCorpDNA.com)

**DDC Diagnostic**  
1-800-362-2368  
[www.dnacenter.com](http://www.dnacenter.com)

**Paternity Testing Corporation**  
1-888-837-8323  
[www.ptclabs.com](http://www.ptclabs.com)



If you are not sure who the father is, you should not complete the AOP form. You may also consider contacting an attorney of your choice or contact your local Juvenile Domestic and Relations court (JDR) for more information about your situation.