

# ESTABLISHING PATERNITY



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**State Court Administrative Office  
Friend of the Court Bureau  
Michigan Supreme Court**

<https://courts.michigan.gov/Administration/SCAO/OfficesPrograms/FOC>

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**What is paternity establishment?**

Paternity establishment is when the law recognizes a man as the child's father.

**How is paternity established?**

If parents are married to each other when a child is born or when the mother became pregnant, the mother's husband is the child's legal father.

Unmarried parents can establish paternity one of three ways:

- Voluntarily by completing an Affidavit of Parentage form. This means they agree to name the father of the child; or;
- Either parent or a prosecuting attorney can ask the court to help establish paternity. This usually involves DNA paternity testing (also referred to as genetic testing) and a court hearing.
- Paternity can also be established by adoption.

**How can parents ask the court to establish paternity?**

A parent who lives in Michigan can file a paternity case in the county where the mother or child lives. If the mother and child do not live in Michigan, a parent can file the case in the county where the possible father lives.

**What if the mother or father does not want to establish paternity?**

Either parent can ask the court for help with getting paternity established, even if the other parent does not want to participate. The mother or the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) can ask the court to establish paternity. The possible father may ask for a court hearing to prove whether he is the father. Parents who receive public assistance may be required to go to court to establish paternity if they do not establish paternity voluntarily.

**What if I am unsure of who the biological father is?**

Either parent may contact a MDHHS child support specialist at 1-866-540-0008. The specialist will help you identify and locate the possible father. The Office of Child support can also set up DNA paternity testing to determine the biological father. At-home paternity tests, or results from an unapproved lab, are not accepted.

If you receive public assistance and refuse to give information about a possible father, your public assistance benefits may be lowered or stopped.

**When can the father's name be put on the child's birth certificate?**

If the mother is married when she becomes pregnant or when the baby is born, her husband's name will be put on the birth certificate as the child's father. This usually happens at the hospital when the baby is born. There is no fee.

If the mother is not married when she becomes pregnant or when the baby is born, or if the mother was never married, the mother and father must establish paternity before the father's name can be put on the birth certificate.

The father's name can be added to the birth certificate any time after the family leaves the hospital but there is a fee to add his name.

The birth certificate does not establish paternity.

**Can paternity be established if the father lives outside of Michigan?**

Yes, the Michigan Child Support Program can work with the other state to help establish paternity. Also, the father can sign the affidavit to say he is the child's father, even if he lives in another state.