

of the form. The VAP is considered valid when it is accepted and filed with HFS.

What if a parent changes his or her mind after the VAP is signed?

Either parent named on the VAP can cancel the VAP by properly completing a Rescission of Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity or Rescission of Denial of Parentage (Rescission). The Rescission must be signed, witnessed, and filed with the Department within 60 days from the effective date of either the VAP and/or the Denial of Parentage (Denial), or the date of a proceeding relating to the child, whichever occurs first. After the 60 day period, a Rescission may no longer be filed.

What if parents are not sure who the father is?

If parents are not sure who the biological father of the child is, do not sign the VAP. Establishing paternity by genetic (paternity) testing is a better option.

What is a paternity test?

A paternity test compares the DNA of the child, mother, and alleged father to determine whether the man is, or is not, the biological father of a child. Paternity tests are simple and accurate. A DNA sample is obtained by swabbing the inside of a person's cheek. Child Support Services will assist in completing the appropriate forms, and schedule paternity tests.

How are custody and visitation determined?

All custody and visitation issues must be determined by the courts and are not addressed by HFS.

For more information go to www.childsupport.illinois.gov or call the Child Support Customer Service Call Center at 1-800-447-4278. Persons using a teletypewriter (TTY) device may call 1-800-526-5812.



State of Illinois
Department of Healthcare and
Family Services

What Parents Need To Know About Establishing Paternity In Illinois



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If the parents of a child are not married or in a civil union when the child is born, the father is not considered the legal father of the child, even if the parents live together and plan to be married. His name cannot be added to the birth certificate until paternity is established.

What is paternity?

Paternity is a legal relationship between a father and his child.

If the mother of a child is or was married or in a civil union when the child was born or within 300 days before the child was born, the person the mother was married to or in a civil union with during that time is legally presumed to be the father of the child.

Why is establishing paternity important?

Establishing paternity gives a child rights to

Financial Security

- Social Security benefits from a deceased or disabled parent
- Inheritance
- Veteran's benefits (when applicable)
- Health and life insurance benefits

Medical History – May provide an opportunity for a child to obtain medical information.

How is paternity established?

There are three ways to establish paternity:

- Both parents complete, sign, and have a Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity (VAP) form witnessed and filed with the Department of Healthcare and Family
- An Administrative Paternity Order is established and entered by HFS' Child Support Services; or
- An Order of Paternity is established and entered in court judicially.

An easy way for parents to establish paternity is to complete a VAP form at the hospital when the child is born. Parents can ask hospital staff for a VAP when providing information for the child's birth certificate. Hospital staff can help parents complete this form.

What is the Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity?

The VAP is a legal document that is used to establish paternity for unwed parents. Once the VAP is completed and filed with HFS, it will be used to have the father's name added to the child's birth certificate.

If parents choose to take the VAP home to complete, both parents must read the instructions and parents' rights and responsibilities on the back of the form or call 1-844-215-6576 to hear the oral explanation. Parents must then complete, sign, date have the VAP witnessed by a person 18 years or older who is not a person named on the form, and mail to HFS-Administrative Coordination Unit where it will be verified and filed.

A VAP can be completed, signed, witnessed, and filed at any time for any child.

Where can parents get a VAP?

A VAP may be obtained from any of the following locations:

- Hospital;
- Local Child Support Office;
- HFS/DCSS website – www.childsupport.illinois.gov;
- Any Department of Human Services office;
- Any County Clerk's office; or
- Any state or local Registrar's office.

Who can sign the VAP?

Any biological parent may sign the VAP, including:

- Parents who are not legally married or in a civil union,
- Minors without the consent of a parent or guardian, and
- Non-US citizens if the child was born in the U.S.

If a man signs the VAP, will he be required to pay child support?

Both parents have the responsibility to support their child. Either parent may be ordered to provide child support and/or medical coverage. However, only one parent will be ordered to pay child support to the other parent.

How do parents make the VAP official?

Make sure all items are answered completely. Sign, date, have witnessed, and submit the VAP to HFS, by following the instructions on the back