

Paternity testing – it's simple!

If either parent has questions about who is the child's biological father, a simple test can provide the answer.

If there is any doubt, parents should request testing before signing a Voluntary Acknowledgment or asking a court to establish paternity. If you establish paternity without testing, you may not be able to get the test later.

Some facts about paternity tests:

- Testing uses DNA and is extremely accurate in showing whether or not a man is the biological father of a child.
- Testing is simple and painless. A cotton swab is rubbed on the inside of the cheek on the mother, child, and alleged father.
- DOR can help parents arrange for paternity testing at little or no cost.
- If the test shows the man is the father (over a probability of 97%), and the parents are satisfied with the results:
 - The parents can sign the Voluntary Acknowledgment form; or
 - The court can enter an order establishing the man as the child's legal father.



DOR Services

If you have any questions or want to apply for DOR child support services, please contact us at:

800-332-2733
(Toll Free in U.S. and Puerto Rico)

800-255-5587 TTY/TDD/TT
(for the hearing impaired)

617-660-1234 (for local callers)
Monday – Friday

8:30 AM to 4:30 PM

E-mail to: csegen@dor.state.ma.us

Our telephone automated voice response system (VRS) is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To avoid busy signals, call after 5:00 PM.

For more information about our services, or to use any of our various online services, visit our website at:

www.mass.gov/cse



Two Parents



Why two parents are important to your child and what you can do about it.



This brochure answers questions about establishing paternity for a child whose parents have never been married to each other.

The Child Support Enforcement Division of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) assists families in establishing paternity and ensuring that families receive child support payments on time and in full.



Massachusetts
Department of Revenue
Child Support Enforcement
Division



Giving Your Child The Right Start

Raising a child is a big responsibility. Children require lots of love, care and attention to thrive. Children benefit when two parents are involved positively in their lives.

If a child's parents are not married when the child is born, the child has no legal father unless the parents take steps to establish paternity.

Establishing paternity is the first step to ensuring that your child can count on the emotional and financial support of both parents.

Even if a man says he is the father, acts like the father, or lives with and supports the child, it does not establish the man as the child's legal father unless paternity is legally established. And unless paternity is established legally, the child's birth certificate will not include the father's name.



Establishing Paternity Can:

- ✓ Give your child a sense of identity and allow your child to have both parents' names on his or her birth certificate.
- ✓ Help ensure that both parents share the responsibilities of raising their child, and give the child a better chance to succeed in life.
- ✓ Be the first step in ensuring financial support for your child.
- ✓ Help your child gain access to the father's benefits (such as Social Security, pension, health insurance, or inheritance) and the father's medical history in case of illness.

Establishing Paternity Does Not:

- ✓ Automatically establish a child support order. That requires a separate court action.
- ✓ Automatically give the other parent custody or visitation. If the mother is not married to the father, the mother is presumed to have custody unless a court orders differently. If parents cannot agree on visitation or parenting time, either parent can ask the court to make an order about custody and visitation. The court's first consideration when making custody and visitation orders is the best interests of the child.

Establishing Paternity Is Not Hard To Do

Parents can sign a form

When both parents agree, they can sign a legal form called a Voluntary Acknowledgment of Parentage. Once it is signed and filed with the court or Registry of Vital Records and Statistics, legal fatherhood is established.

The form can be signed:

- At the hospital when the child is born for no charge;
- At the town or city hall clerk's office for a fee; or
- At the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics in Boston for a fee.

Parents can complete the Voluntary Acknowledgment any time after the child is born. There is no time limit, but it is best to do it as soon as possible after the child's birth.

Both parents must bring a photo ID when they sign the Voluntary Acknowledgment form.

