

HOW TO: Establish Paternity

MISSOURI STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER



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What does it mean to establish paternity?

Establishing paternity is a very important step in the legal processes involving families and child support. Establishing who the biological and legal father of a child is impacts many things:

- **Child Support:** Before deciding how much money the dad needs to give for the child's needs (child support), we have to be sure who the dad is.
- **Custody and Visitation:** Who gets to take care of the child and visit them is also decided based on knowing who the real dad is. Dads have certain rights and responsibilities.
- **Inheritance:** If something happens to either the child or the dad, knowing who the dad is becomes important for deciding who gets what from the other.
- **Medical History:** Knowing who the dad is helps us get the full medical story of the child, which is important for taking care of their health.

For help with paternity questions, such as how to get the father's name listed on the child's birth certificate or how to get free paternity testing, call Missouri Department of Social Services at 855-454-8037.

Ways to establish paternity

- Genetic Testing
- Paternity Affidavit
- Court order

Genetic Testing:

If someone needs to figure out who the biological dad is, they can get free paternity testing through the Family Support Division. This test, also called DNA or genetic testing, involves gently rubbing a Q-tip-like swab inside the cheek of the child, the mom, and the potential dad. After that, these swabs are sent to a lab for testing. If the results show there's at least a 98 percent chance that the man is the dad, according to Missouri law, he is considered the presumed father.

But it's important to know that just having the genetic test done isn't enough to legally say who the dad is. To make it official, parents need to fill out an Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity or get a court order naming that person as the child's father.



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Paternity Affidavit

The Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity is an important paper that needs careful attention. Before completing it, one must listen to certain information spoken aloud, known as oral notice, which is explained in the Notice of Rights.

If the Affidavit is being filled out at the hospital during the child's birth, the hospital staff will provide the necessary information.

If the affidavit is being completed after the birth certificate has been filed, the agency that gave the form will give the required information. Another way to get this information is by calling Missouri Family Support Division at 1-888-677-2083.

Paternity Affidavit Forms

There are different forms for different situations impacting Paternity. Each of these different Paternity Affidavit forms can be found [here](#).

- [Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity Notice of Rights](#)
- [Father's Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity](#)
- [Husband's Denial of Paternity](#)
- [Mother's Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity](#)
- [Rescission of Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity](#)

The Mother's and Father's Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity, along with the Husband's Denial of Paternity (if needed), must be sent together.

All these documents must be submitted to the Bureau of Vital Records by mail.

Bureau of Vital Records Mailing Address:

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
930 Wildwood Drive
Jefferson City, MO 65109

Court Order

In some cases, the court steps in and decides to do tests if there's an argument or if someone is saying they're not the dad.

Remember, the rules and steps for finding out who the dad is can be different in different places, so it's a good idea to talk to someone who knows the rules, like a legal expert, especially where you live.



Print List

1. "How to: Establish Paternity Guide
2. Any affidavit sheets you may need.

Full Links/ Reference (in order of appearance)

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Paternity Forms

<https://dss.mo.gov/child-support/establish-paternity.htm>

Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity Notice of Rights

<https://health.mo.gov/lvrecords/affidavit-acknowledging-paternity.pdf>

Father's Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity

<https://health.mo.gov/lvrecords/fathers-affidavit-acknowledging-paternity.pdf>

Mother's Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity

<https://health.mo.gov/lvrecords/mothers-affidavit-acknowledging-paternity.pdf>

Rescission of Affidavit Acknowledging Paternity

<https://health.mo.gov/lvrecords/RescissionForm.pdf>

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