



What every parent should know about

Establishing Parentage

866-540-0008 | Michigan.gov/ChildSupport



What is parentage?

Parentage is the legal relationship between a child and a parent of the child.



Why is it important to establish parentage?

Establishing a legal relationship between a parent and a child is important. It gives both the parent and the child important rights and benefits. These rights and benefits include:

Identity

It's good for children to have a chance to know both of their parents. This gives the child a sense of identity.

Family ties

Every child has the right to a relationship with both parents. The child may come to know both sides of the family. This can give the child a sense of belonging.

Financial support

The law requires both parents to support their children. Parents can share the cost of raising their child, even if they don't live together. Children are more likely to have their needs met when both parents give financial support.

Benefits

A child has a right to benefits from both parents. These can include:

- Health and life insurance.
- Social Security.
- Pensions.
- Inheritance rights.
- Veterans' benefits.

Benefits can be very important for a child if a parent dies or becomes disabled.

Medical information

Knowing the medical histories of both biological parents can be important if the family has any health problems.

How is parentage established?

Married parents

If parents are married to each other when the child is born or when the mother became pregnant, the mother and the mother's spouse are the child's legal parents. This is true regardless of the spouse's gender.

Married parents who have agreed to use assisted reproduction (such as fertility treatments or IVF) with the intent to be the parents of the child, can put both of their names on the birth certificate. However, it is encouraged that they also use another method to make sure that their parent-child relationship is legally recognized. One way to do that is to use the Affidavit of Parentage. For more information, read under "Affidavit of Parentage."

It is important to note that the birth certificate is a record of the child's birth; it is not used to establish parentage.

Unmarried parents

Parents who are not married to each other must do something to establish parentage. There are two main ways parents can establish parentage when they are not married:

- Establish parentage voluntarily. This means the mother and another individual agree to name that individual as a parent of the child. They can do this by completing an Affidavit of Parentage; or
- Ask the local family court to help establish parentage. This may involve DNA paternity testing to determine the biological father.



AFFIDAVIT OF PARENTAGE
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
Division for Vital Records and Health Statistics

State File Number (For Official Use Only)	
AOP Number	Date of Filing

THIS FORM BECOMES FULLY EFFECTIVE UPON FILING WITH THE STATE DIVISION OF VITAL RECORDS

CHILD'S NAME AND INFORMATION AS IT CURRENTLY APPEARS ON THE BIRTH RECORD			
First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	Suffix
Hospital Name or Street Address		City, County, State	Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY)

CHILD'S NAME AS IT IS TO APPEAR ON THE BIRTH RECORD			
First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	Suffix

ACKNOWLEDGING PARENT'S/FATHER'S INFORMATION			
First Name		Middle Name	
Last Name			Suffix
Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY)	State of Birth (If Not U.S., Then Country)	Social Security Number	
Current Address (Street, Apartment Number, City, State, Zip)			

BIRTH PARENT'S/MOTHER'S INFORMATION			
First Name		Middle Name	
Last Name			Suffix
Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY)	State of Birth (If Not U.S., Then Country)	Social Security Number	
Current Address (Street, Apartment Number, City, State, Zip)			

Check one of the two boxes below. Do not check more than one.

We affirm that the man will be considered the natural father of this child. We affirm that the mother was not married at the time this child was born or conceived, or she was married but a court of law has determined that the child is not an issue of the marriage. The child was not born subject to a surrogacy agreement or by assisted reproduction.

We affirm that the child was conceived by assisted reproduction, not involving surrogacy. We understand that the acknowledging parent will be considered the natural parent of this child. We affirm that at the time of conception or birth, we were married unmarried

In signing this form, we understand that:

a. This is a legal document, and completion of this form is voluntary.
b. Either parent may ask a court for parenting time or custody.
c. Both parents have a right to notice and a hearing regarding the adoption of the child.
d. Both parents must support the child and comply with a court or administrative order for the child's support.
e. We waive the following:
1. Blood or genetic tests to determine if the individual is the biological parent of the child.
2. Any right to an attorney, including the Prosecuting Attorney or a court-appointed attorney, to represent either party in a court action to determine if the individual is the biological parent of the child.
3. A trial to determine if the individual is the biological parent of the child.

f. For a child not conceived by assisted reproduction, the mother has initial custody of the child, without prejudice to either parent's custodial rights, until otherwise determined by the court or agreed upon by the parties in writing and acknowledged by the court. This grant of initial custody does not, by itself, affect the rights of either parent in a proceeding to seek a court order for custody or parenting time.
g. To revoke the Affidavit of Parentage for a child not conceived through assisted reproduction, an individual must file a claim as provided under the Revocation of Parentage Act (Michigan Compiled Law [MCL] 722.1437).

ACKNOWLEDGING PARENT'S/FATHER'S SIGNATURE	
I affirm that the above information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.	
Signature	Date

BIRTH PARENT'S/MOTHER'S SIGNATURE	
I affirm that the above information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.	
Signature	Date

NOTARY OR QUALIFIED WITNESS SECTION – For Official Use Only (See Page 2 for instructions and a list of qualified witnesses.)

NOTARY OR QUALIFIED WITNESS FOR ACKNOWLEDGING PARENT/FATHER		
Notary Public, State of _____ County of _____		Signed and Sworn Before Me on (Date)
Acting in the County of _____	Commission Expiration Date	
Signature of Notary or Qualified Witness		
Printed Name of Notary or Qualified Witness		
Qualified Witness Place and Address of Employment		

NOTARY OR QUALIFIED WITNESS FOR BIRTH PARENT/MOTHER		
Notary Public, State of _____ County of _____		Signed and Sworn Before Me on (Date)
Acting in the County of _____	Commission Expiration Date	
Signature of Notary or Qualified Witness		
Printed Name of Notary or Qualified Witness		
Qualified Witness Place and Address of Employment		

The Affidavit of Parentage

What does it mean to sign the Affidavit of Parentage?

The Affidavit of Parentage (AOP) is a legal document. Individuals can complete it to agree that they want to be a legal parent with all of the rights and responsibilities of parentage. Signing the AOP is always voluntary. When parents sign the AOP, they agree that:

- If the child was not conceived by assisted reproduction, the mother has initial custody of the child unless there is a court order stating otherwise, or the parents agree on something else in writing. When a parent has custody, it means the child will live with that parent.
- Either parent may file a claim at their local family court for parenting time or custody.
- If one parent wants the child to be adopted by someone else, the other parent must be notified.
- Both parents will support their child financially. If child support is ordered by the court, parents must follow the order.
- Both parents give up their right to:
 - Get blood or genetic testing to determine the biological parent.
 - Have a lawyer represent either of them to determine biological parentage.
 - Go to court to determine the biological parent.

Once the AOP has been filed with the State Division of Vital Records, it carries the same weight as a court order.

Where and when can parents sign the AOP?

The parents can sign the AOP at the hospital after the child is born, or anywhere at a later time. The AOP must also be signed by someone who is a qualified witness or a Notary Public. This person will check the parents' signatures and photo IDs, so parents must have a valid photo ID with them at that time.

If the AOP is signed at the hospital right after the child is born:

- Both parents will be listed on the birth certificate for free.
- Most hospital staff can witness or notarize the parents' signatures and answer questions.
- Hospital staff will send the AOP to the State Division of Vital Records to be filed.

If the AOP is signed at a later time:

- Parents must find a qualified witness or a Notary Public to sign the form.
- The birth certificate was already created at the hospital, so if the parents want the second parent's name added to the birth certificate, they will need to ask the State Division of Vital Records to modify the birth record. This will require the parents to complete an Add a Parent Application and pay a fee.
- Parents must mail the original copy of the AOP to the State Division of Vital Records.

Establishing parentage in court

Parentage can also be established by a judge in court. Parents can ask the local family court to help establish parentage by hiring a lawyer or by contacting the Office of Child Support for help. Establishing parentage may involve DNA paternity testing.

Parents who receive certain types of public assistance may be required to work with their local family court to establish parentage if they do not sign the AOP.



Questions about establishing parentage

Why is now the right time to establish parentage?

Children need care and support from their parents, right from birth. Establishing parentage early can lead to stronger parent-child relationships and a greater sense of security and stability for children. **Give a child the best possible chance in life by establishing parentage as early as possible.**

What if the parents do not want to establish parentage?

If the parents do not want to establish parentage, they should not sign the AOP. Either parent can contact the Office of Child Support for help with establishing parentage when they are ready. If one or both parents do not want to establish parentage because they think it will put them or their child at risk for harm, they should not sign the AOP. Signing the AOP is always voluntary.

What if either parent is not sure who the biological father is?

If the parents are not sure who the biological father is, they should not sign the AOP. Instead, either parent can ask for a DNA paternity test to determine the biological father of the child. Either parent can contact the Office of Child Support for help with DNA paternity testing.

At-home paternity tests, or results from an unapproved lab, cannot be used to determine the legal father. Only DNA paternity tests completed through an approved lab with a contractual agreement with the Office of Child Support will be accepted.

If the child was conceived by assisted reproduction, without surrogacy, and in which the male donor is unknown, then the parents may still sign the AOP.

What if the mother is married to someone else?

If the birth mother was married at the time of the child's birth or conception, the law presumes her spouse (or ex-spouse) to be the child's legal parent. The spouse's name will be placed on the birth certificate. The biological parent cannot sign the AOP unless a court finds that the spouse is not the legal parent.

What if the parents are a same-sex couple?

If the child was conceived with assisted reproduction, without surrogacy, the AOP can be used by:

- A mother who is married when the child is born and the mother's spouse; or
- A mother who is unmarried when the child is born and the person who intends to be the child's other parent.

If the child was **not** conceived with assisted reproduction, an *unmarried* same-sex couple cannot sign the AOP.

What if the parents used surrogacy to conceive?

If surrogacy was used to conceive the child, individuals cannot sign the AOP. State law requires a surrogacy agreement to establish parentage.

What if the other parent lives outside of Michigan?

The Michigan Office of Child Support can work with the other state to help with the establishment of parentage. Also, the other parent can sign the AOP even if they live in another state.

What if the parents are under the age of 18?

Parents of any age can establish parentage for their child. A parent under the age of 18, without anyone's consent, can sign an AOP or ask the local family court or the Office of Child Support to establish parentage using a DNA paternity test.

Can a signed AOP be taken back (revoked)?

An AOP filed with the State Division of Vital Records is equal to a court order. There are few circumstances in which an individual can ask the court to revoke an AOP. This is a complicated legal process that has a limited timeframe to complete. The individuals should consult with an attorney.

When is DNA paternity testing done?

DNA paternity testing can be done any time after the baby is born. When parents are not sure who the biological father is, they should not sign the AOP. Instead, parents should contact the Office of Child Support to ask for help with DNA paternity testing.

How is DNA paternity testing done?

Either parent can contact the Office of Child Support to ask for DNA paternity testing. A child support worker will arrange for a lab to do the testing and give the final report. Parents can also ask for DNA paternity testing through the court.

The test is simple and painless and usually takes place at your local family court. DNA samples are taken by rubbing cotton-tipped swabs on the inside of the cheek of the mother, father and child. All three DNA samples are sent to a lab. The lab compares the samples for a match.

What does DNA paternity testing show?

DNA paternity testing shows whether or not a man is the biological father of a child.

If the test shows the man is the biological father, another step is needed to make him the legal father:

- The parents can sign the AOP to make him the legal father; or
- The parents can go to the local family court, where a judge will order that the man is the legal father of the child.

Who pays for DNA paternity testing?

The Office of Child Support can help parents set up DNA paternity testing at little or no cost. The local family court will decide who will pay for the testing.



Questions about custody, parenting time, and child support

Who has custody of the child?

For parents who have not used assisted reproduction to conceive, initial custody is given to the mother after both parents sign the AOP. Once parentage is established, either parent can ask the local family court to help make a custody decision; for example, the parents may agree to joint custody.

Do both parents have the right to parenting time?

Yes. Both parents have the right to spend time with their child. Parents can make their own agreement about parenting time for each parent, or the local family court can help them set up parenting time.

How is child support determined?

Child support is set by a formula in state law. The formula uses both parents' income and the number of nights a child spends in each parent's home. Other factors may also be considered.

A child support calculator is available on the [Michigan.gov/ChildSupport](https://www.michigan.gov/ChildSupport) website. Either parent can use it to calculate the possible child support amount.

Where do I get help in starting a child support case?

The Office of Child Support can provide free help with starting a child support case. You do not have to be receiving public assistance. Private attorneys can also help with a child support case.

Give your baby the best possible chance in life by establishing parentage *now*.

Don't wait. Do it for your child.

Need more information?



To start a child support case, establish parentage, locate forms, or get a child support order, contact the **Michigan Office of Child Support** at:

Michigan.gov/ChildSupport
866-540-0008



To make changes to a birth certificate (birth record), or locate forms, contact the **State Division of Vital Records Changes Unit** within the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services at:

Michigan.gov/VitalRecords
517-335-8660



To get help with conciliation, mediation, and other forms of dispute resolution, contact the **Community Dispute Resolution Program** at:

Courts.Michigan.gov/Administration/Offices/Office-of-Dispute-Resolution/CDRP/
517-373-4839



To get support for anyone affected by domestic violence and/or sexual assault, including family, friends, and allied professions, contact the **Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence (MCEDSV)** at:

MCEDSV.org for text or chat or general information.
866-864-2338 for hotline.



m i c h i g a n
child support



Office of Child Support

DHS-Pub-780 (Rev. 11/25)

Previous editions obsolete.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) does not discriminate against any individual or group on the basis of race, national origin, color, sex, disability, religion, age, height, weight, familial status, partisan considerations, or genetic information. Sex-based discrimination includes, but is not limited to, discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, and pregnancy.

