

— Fatherhood —
Give your child the
dadvantage.

Support your child in every way.



866-540-0008
michigan.gov/childsupport



Children do better with fathers in their lives.

Parenting is one of the greatest responsibilities a person has. Dads and moms bring important, but different, qualities to a child's life. Children benefit from having both parents involved in their lives, whether the parents live together or not.

When fathers are involved, children are more likely to:

- Have emotional and financial support.
- Do better in school.
- Delay having children of their own.
- Have higher self-esteem.
- Have fewer behavior problems.
- Stay out of gangs.
- Stay out of jail and be drug-free.

As a dad, you can help your child by establishing paternity, which means making yourself the legal father of your child.

Questions from dads.

Why is it important for me to become the legal father of my child?

Dads and moms both have the right to know their child. They also have the responsibility to support their child emotionally and financially – even if they aren't married to each other.

When a baby is born to married parents, the law recognizes two legal parents: the husband and wife. Married couples do not need to take any legal steps to establish paternity.

When a baby is born to parents who are not married to each other, the law does not accept the biological father as a legal parent. **In other words, a biological father who is not married to the mother of his child does not have legal rights to his child until he becomes a legal parent.**

Establishing paternity gives a child born to unmarried parents the same legal rights as a child born to married parents, which is why it's so important.

Having a legal father gives children:

Identity

For children, there's an emotional benefit when they know both of their parents. It gives them a sense of identity. When you are the legal father, your name can also be listed on the birth certificate.

Family Ties

Family gives children a sense of belonging. Help your child know your side of the family.

Financial Support

The law requires both parents to support their children. You can share the cost of raising your child, even if you do not live with the mother. 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.

Medical Information

Knowing the medical history of both parents is important for the child. It could give information about family health problems. Give your child a healthy start.

My child's mom and I aren't married. How can I voluntarily establish paternity?

If you're sure you're the biological father, you and your child's mom can establish paternity by signing the Affidavit of Parentage form, or "affidavit" (the form number is DCH-0682).

- Both parents need to provide a picture ID.
- Signing is voluntary.
- Signatures must be signed in front of a qualified witness or a notary.

You and your child's mom can sign the affidavit at the hospital after your child is born, and your name will be put on the child's birth certificate for free. You may sign the affidavit at a later time, but if you do, you must pay a fee to add your name as the father on the birth certificate.

You can also ask the Office of Child Support to help establish paternity. This usually involves DNA paternity testing.

My child's mom is married to a different man. Can I still sign the affidavit?

No. By Michigan law, the husband is the legal father of the child. Only a judge can say the husband is not the legal father.

What is the difference between a legal father and a biological father?

Every child has a biological father, or birth father. The biological father is the man who created the baby with the mother.

The legal father is the man the law accepts as the father of the child. The legal father is not always the biological father.

What if my child's mom or her family don't want me to sign the affidavit?

If you believe you're the child's father, it's your right and responsibility to establish paternity, even if the child's mom or her family don't want you to. Contact the Office of Child Support for help with establishing paternity.

What else do I need to know about establishing paternity voluntarily?

When you sign the affidavit, you agree to the following:

- The mother has initial custody of the child. This means the child will live with the mother unless the court or the parents agree on something else in writing.
- Either you or the child's mom may ask the local family court for help with parenting time or custody.
- Both of you will receive a notice and a hearing if your child might be adopted by someone else.
- Both of you must support your child and follow an order for child support.
- Both of you give up your right to:
 - Get a DNA paternity test.
 - Have a local family court-appointed lawyer represent either of you regarding paternity.
 - Go to trial to determine the biological father.

What if I'm not sure the child is mine?

If the mother says the child is yours, but you think the child may not be, contact the Office of Child Support for help. A child support worker can help you file a case and arrange for a local family court hearing where you and the mother tell your sides of the story. The local family court may order a DNA paternity test to help establish paternity.

What is a DNA paternity test?

A DNA paternity test is used to identify the biological father of a child. DNA is the genetic material in our bodies that contains hereditary information. DNA is passed down from both parents to their children.

A lab provides the testing and the report showing the results. Testing is simple and painless. DNA samples are taken by rubbing a cotton-tipped swab on the inside of the cheek of the mom, dad and child.

The lab compares all three DNA samples for a match. The results will be able to tell if you have at least a 99 percent chance of being the biological father.

How can I get a DNA paternity test?

You can contact the Office of Child Support to set up DNA paternity testing at a reduced cost.

If you or your child's mom are on public assistance, and you and your child's mom are not living together, you may be automatically referred to the Office of Child Support to open a case.

If paternity for your child is not established, the Office of Child Support will open a case and refer you to the court for paternity establishment.

Who pays for the DNA paternity testing?

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

How can I spend time with my child?

Spending time with your child is called parenting time. (It used to be called visitation.) Parenting time is the first step to a great relationship between you and your child. If you and your child's mom cannot agree on parenting time, the local family court can help you. A parenting time schedule may be part of a court order.

Will I have to pay child support?

If you are found to be the legal father, yes, you will likely need to support your child. This means you, the mother and your child may be included on a child support case, where the local family court may order financial support.

How much will I have to pay in child support?

If you have a child support case, the local family court will decide the amount of support you and/or your child's mom will have to pay. The amount is set by the Michigan Child Support Formula.

The formula uses both parents' income, the number of children and the number of nights the children spend with each parent. Medical or other costs for your child may also be included in the child support order.

I live outside of Michigan. Do I still have to pay child support?

Yes. If you are the legal father and you have a child support order, you will have to pay child support, even if you live outside of Michigan.

Where can I go for help?

For more information on establishing paternity, contact the Michigan Office of Child Support at:

866-540-0008

You can also start a child support case at

michigan.gov/childsupport



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Office of Child Support

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