**Overview of Paternity Establishment**

If a child is born to an unmarried mother, the child does not have a legal father unless the parents take steps to establish a legal father. The father’s name will not appear on the child’s birth certificate unless the parents establish him as the legal father. If the mother is married, the husband is the presumed legal father of the child.

**How can the Paternity Acknowledgement Program help me?**

If you want to know if establishing paternity is right for you and your child;
If you want to find out more about the process; or
If you have questions about what paternity establishment means,
You can get answers here or by calling us at **1-800-248-1163**.

**Why Establish Paternity?**

Legally establishing paternity protects your child by giving them options and advantages they might otherwise not have. Establishing paternity provides your child with a security only you can give. Below are some of the reasons you may want to establish paternity:

*For Your Child’s Sense of Identity-*
Children find it very important to know who their mother and father are, and to have a relationship with both parents. Children who don’t know both parents often miss out on knowing both sides of their extended family, so they may not know grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, as well as a parent.

*To Help Set-up Custody & Visitation-*
Unless a court order is issued, the mother is the sole residential parent and the legal custodian of the child. However, once paternity is established, the father can ask the court for visitation rights and/or to share in custody arrangements. This provides the opportunity for the father and child to see each other regularly and for the father to seek custody of the child if something happens to the mother. It can also help take the pressure off a single parent trying to raise a child alone.

*To Establish Child Support-*
Both parents have the responsibility to financially support their child. If the parents choose to separate and paternity has already been established, it will be easier for the child to continue receiving the support he or she needs.

*To Secure Financial Benefits-*
Legal paternity allows the child to qualify for important financial benefits from the father. These benefits may include social security, life insurance, veterans’ benefits, and inheritance rights if something happens to the father.

*To Provide Medical Benefits-*
A legal father may be able to add his child to his health insurance policy. Also, it is important for a child to know the medical history of both parents.

*Because Fathers are Important in Kids’ Lives-*
Children themselves tell us what an impact their dads have on their lives.

**How do I Establish Paternity for My Child?**

In Kentucky, unmarried parents can establish paternity two ways:

1. Voluntary Acknowledgement of Paternity Affidavit: By signing this affidavit, both parents agree that a man is the biological father of a child and choose to make him the legal father of the child.
2. Order of Paternity: For unmarried parents that have not established paternity through another method and wish to get genetic testing, the Child Support Enforcement Office can conduct the testing and petition the court to issue an order of paternity if the man is indeed the biological father of the child. If the mother lives in Kentucky, please contact the Child Support Enforcement Office in the mother’s county of residence. If the mother lives outside of Kentucky, you may contact the Child Support Enforcement Office in the father’s county of residence.

**Where do I Complete a Voluntary Acknowledgement of Paternity Affidavit?**

The Acknowledgement of Paternity Affidavit can be completed at these locations:

* At the time of birth, unmarried parents are offered the opportunity to complete the Affidavit at the hospital or birthing facility.
* Afterwards, an Affidavit may be completed at your local health department.
* An Affidavit may also be completed at your local child support office.
* All of these locations have trained staff available to assist parents in completing an Affidavit. They also have notaries on staff to notarize the parents’ signatures. Parents must provide suitable picture identification to the notary.