

Establishing Paternity

What is Paternity?

Paternity means father or fatherhood. Establishing paternity creates a legal relationship between a child and the father when no legal relationship previously existed. Actions to establish a legal relationship are informally referred to as Paternity actions. If you are not sure if a paternity action is needed, call the phone number in the box at the bottom to discuss your situation.

Why is it important to prove Paternity?

- **Identity:** It is important to all of us to know who we are. Your child has the right to the sense of belonging that comes from knowing both parents.
- **Medical:** Your child needs to know if he or she has inherited any special health concerns.
- **Monetary:** By law both parents must support their child. This is true even if you did not plan to have a baby. Children who are supported by only one parent often do not have enough money to meet their needs.
- **Benefits:** Your child has the right to benefits from both parents. These may be Social Security benefits, health insurance coverage, inheritance rights, and/or military and veteran's benefits. Your child may not be entitled to these benefits if paternity is not proven.

Do I need to prove Paternity now if the father and I live together or he is helping me with the baby?

Yes. Even if the father is helping you now, he may change his mind in the future. He may move and it may be very hard to find him. If he should die before paternity is proven, your child may not be able to claim any benefits (examples above).

What if I am not sure who is the father?

Genetic tests can help prove who the father of your child is. It is important to tell the child support worker all you can about each man who could be the father.

Do I have to answer questions that may embarrass me?

You may need to answer some embarrassing questions, but these answers are needed to help prove who the father is. Give the child support worker the names of any man with whom you had a sexual relationship around the time you became pregnant.

Why is it best to prove Paternity now?

A father who starts to support his child early is more likely to keep supporting him or her. When you wait, you take the chance that things may change and you and your child may not get the help that you need. Give your child the best possible chance in life by proving paternity as soon as possible.

IMPORTANT: If a Paternity action is needed for your child, please contact the Child Support Office for additional paperwork.
Your case will be assigned to a Child Support Officer who specializes in Paternity actions.
Call Child Support Intake at 763-682-7434 for more information.