

PATERNITY FACT SHEET

Why is Paternity Important?

Paternity establishment is the legal determination of fatherhood. By law, an unmarried female who gives birth to a child is the sole residential and legal custodian of that child until an Ohio court makes an order.¹

By establishing paternity, a father gains the right to seek custody, shared parenting and parenting time. The child gains certain legal rights and privileges as well, including inheritance rights, medical insurance benefits, social security benefits, etc., through the father.

Paternity establishment can provide a biological, emotional, and financial connection between a father and a child and provide a legal basis for a child support order to be issued. Paternity establishment provides the child with a sense of identity and family heritage and completes the child's biological / medical history.

What is the Putative Father Registry and Why Should I Register?

A man who thinks a woman may be pregnant with his child, should register with the Putative Father Registry. If a man does not register before the child's birth or no later than 30 days after the birth, the child could be permanently adopted with only the birth mother's consent. Registering with the Putative Father Registry does not establish parentage.

How Can Paternity be Established?

Genetic Testing: You can submit to a painless mouth swabbing to take DNA to establish paternity. The testing is not always free and is 99% accurate. The DNA results are then submitted to a court or child support agency to assist with either an administrative paternity finding (which is a decision made the by the Child Support Enforcement Agency) or a court order of paternity (which is a decision made by the Court). The DNA test results alone never establish legal paternity. It only gives proof if a man is considered to be the biological father or not.

Voluntary Acknowledgment (Acknowledgment of Paternity Affidavit): Affidavits are usually signed at the hospital but can be signed at a later time at the child support agency or local health department as long as there is only one possible father and the mother is single, not married. The affidavit must be signed by both the mother and the father and completed in full. It must be signed by both parties before a notary public.

Default: A man that has been served with a complaint to establish paternity and an Order to appear for genetic testing but fails to appear, may have paternity established in his absence by the Court.

Presumption: A husband is presumed to be the father of a child if the child was born during the marriage or within 300 days of the date of termination of the marriage by court order.

¹ R.C. 3109.042

Will My Child's Last Name Change If Paternity is Established?

The Bureau of Vital Statistics will issue a new birth certificate to include the father's name as the legal parent. The Bureau may also execute a change in the child's last name **only if the mother and father agree** and proper documentation was received from the Central Paternity Registry. If DNA testing was done administratively, the mother and father must complete a one-page form before the test results have been issued to change the child's last name.

Once Paternity is Established, What is the Next Step?

Once Paternity is established, either parent may seek child support, medical support, and parenting time orders. A Child support order can be established at no cost to you through your local child support agency. Parenting time orders can be requested through the Court.

I Signed an Acknowledgment of Paternity, But Now I Have Doubts. What Can I Do?

Within 60 days of signing the Acknowledgment, you can file to rescind the affidavit and pursue genetic testing through the child support enforcement agency in the county in which the child or legal custodian reside.

After 60 days, you will have to bring a private Court action to rescind the Acknowledgment. This must be filed within **one year** after paternity was established.

What If I am Under 18 Years Old and/or the Mother is Under 18 Years Old?

You can register with the Putative Father Registry.

You can sign the Acknowledgment and request that the Acknowledgment later be rescinded. (see above)

You must have your parent or legal guardian with you to file any actions with the Court (Paternity, Support, Custody, and/or legal Parenting Time). If the other parent of the child is under 18 years old, service must be made on their parent or guardian, who also must be listed as a party to the case.

You must have a parent or guardian with you to request child support services including the establishment of paternity at the Child Support Enforcement Agency. If the other parent of the child is under 18 years old, service must be made on their parent or guardian. The CSEA can genetically test parties 16 or 17 years of age without the presence of the minor's parent or guardian based upon state law.

Important Phone Numbers:

Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA)	(614) 525-3275
Court CSEA Liaison	(614) 525-4232
Central Paternity Registry	1-888-810-6446
Putative Father Registry	1-888-313-3100
Lawyer Referral (Columbus Bar Association)	(614) 221-0754

