

**THE BEST
OPPORTUNITY
TO ESTABLISH AN
EMOTIONAL BOND
BETWEEN CHILD AND
PARENT IS AT THE
TIME OF BIRTH.**

**IT IS ALSO A GREAT
TIME TO ESTABLISH
THE LEGAL BOND.**

**For additional information,
please call:**

877.882.4916

General information about the
Child Support Program
mdhs.ms.gov/child-support/

Mississippi Department of Health,
Vital Statistics Bureau
601.206.8200
msdh.ms.gov



**A SIMPLE
ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF
PATERNITY**

MDHS
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

WHAT IS PATERNITY?

Paternity means having a legal father. Establishing paternity provides many benefits for the parents and the child(ren). Biological fathers become legal fathers through one of several methods:

Marriage: If a married couple has children, the husband is presumed to be the legal father. Paternity is established by the birth of a child to a married couple.

The situation is a little different when a child is born to parents who are not married. There are two common methods to establish legal paternity when the parents are not married:

- **A Simple Acknowledgment of Paternity (ASAP)** is a voluntary form, often completed at the hospital. It is signed by both the mother and the father and gets filed with the birth certificate. The father's name will be added to the birth certificate, and in most cases, the child's last name will be the same as the father's. If both parents complete the ASAP, no further action is needed to establish paternity. The hospital or birthing facility will have this form available to parents.

- **Court:** If an unmarried couple does not complete an ASAP, a court will have to establish paternity. The Child Support program does not represent either parent, but is here to assist either parent in completing the necessary steps, including DNA tests if there is a question about the identity of the child's father.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

IDENTITY

Your child wants a sense of belonging to better understand his or her place in this world. A legal father should be part of his/her story.

MEDICAL HISTORY

Your baby's doctor needs a complete medical history from both parents to provide the best care for your child. Your child should know about certain diseases, illnesses and other conditions that are hereditary.

BENEFITS/INHERITANCE

Social Security benefits, veteran's benefits, inheritances, and insurance (both medical and life), can be affected by legal paternity.

CHILD SUPPORT

Both parents have the rights and privileges of providing for their child(ren). A single parent is often not able to fully provide for a child without the financial support of the other parent.



THE HOSPITAL

If both parents agree, and there is no question about the identity of the father, the hospital is a convenient place to complete the ASAP. Hospital staff can assist the parents in completing the form found on the back of the birth certificate.

A Simple Acknowledgment of Paternity can be signed at any time until the child turns 21. The Child Support Program can also assist parents in completing the ASAP.

The mother or father can rescind the ASAP within the first year by contacting the Mississippi Department of Health, Vital Records. When an ASAP is rescinded, the father's voluntary acknowledgement of paternity is cancelled and the father's name will be removed from the birth certificate.