

## The father and I are minors. Can we sign the VAoP?

Yes. In Tennessee, minors can sign the VAoP to acknowledge paternity if your parent or guardian is willing to sign consent and be present when you sign the form.

## If the father signs the form, will he have to pay child support?

Signing the VAoP form does not mean that the father will automatically be made to pay support.

## What if the father is not available to sign because he's in jail or in the military?

You can contact your local health department or child support office to make an appointment to complete the VAoP form. They have a process in place to assist you.

## Is there a fee to have the birth certificate changed?

In order to have the birth certificate changed, the parents will be responsible for paying the associated Vital Records fees. Please visit the Department of Health's Vital Records website for fee amounts: <http://www.tn.gov/health/article/vr-fees>

## What do I need in order to change the child's name on their Social Security card?

The parents must provide the Social Security Office with a certified copy of the Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity and/or a court order and the long form birth certificate.

## For more information:

Visit our website at:

<http://tn.gov/humanservices/topic/child-support-services>

Contact or visit your local Child Support Office.

You can find your nearest Child Support Office at:

<http://tn.gov/humanservices/article/child-support-office-locator>

In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, contact HHS. Write HHS, Director, Office for Civil Rights, Room 506-F, 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201 or call (202) 619-0403 (Voice) or (202) 619-3257 (TTY). HHS are equal opportunity providers and employers.

You may also write Tennessee, DHS, Civil Rights Compliance Officer, James K. Polk Building, 505 Deaderick Street 14th Floor, Nashville, TN 37243, (615) 313-4748.



## Child Support Program:

Phone: 615-313-4880

ChildSupport.CustomerService.DHS@tn.gov

505 Deaderick Street

Nashville, TN 37243



Human Services, Authorization No. 345897, 3,050 copies, April, 2019. This public document was promulgated at a cost of \$0.20 per copy.



# Paternity Guide for Moms

## What Mothers Need to Know about Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity

Department of Human Services



## What is a VAoP?

Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity (VAoP) is Tennessee's official process for parents to legally establish paternity without going to court. For more information, you can also view the VAoP video at: <http://tn.gov/humanservices/article/child-support-establishing-paternity>

## Married Moms

If you are married when:

- Your child is born; or
- Your child is conceived; or
- Any time during the three-hundred (300) days before the birth of your child....

Tennessee law states that your husband is presumed to be the legal father of your child.

## Options for Married Moms

If your husband's or ex-husband's name is placed on your child's birth certificate and he is not the biological father of your child, there are ways to have his name removed from the birth certificate and the biological father's name added. You should contact a private attorney to pursue the matter through court.

## What if I'm not sure he's the father?

If either of you are unsure, you should not sign the VAoP form. You may wish to contact your local child support agency and request DNA testing.

## Divorced Moms

If you finalized your divorce during the last three-hundred (300) days before your child's birth, your ex-husband is presumed to be the legal father. Unless you have a divorce decree that specifically states that your husband or ex-husband is not the biological father of the child you must provide the hospital birth clerk a certified copy of the final divorce decree.

## What if I refuse to give the birth clerk my husband or ex-husband's name?

If you refuse to put your husband or ex-husband's name on your child's birth certificate, the hospital is required to enter 'Mother Refused Information' in the father's name section of the birth certificate. You will not be able to add the biological father of your child to the birth certificate until you have a certified copy of a final court order that states your husband or ex-husband is not the child's biological father. The test results must be attached to the order. This also means that the 'Mother's Copy' of the child's birth certificate will list the father's name as 'Mother Refused Information'.



## If I don't need him to pay child support, why should we sign?

Acknowledging paternity does a lot more than allow for child support. For example:

- It allows the child to know his/her father.
- It allows the father to add the child to his health and life insurance benefits.
- It gives the child rights to military, veterans and Social Security benefits.
- It gives access to both parent's medical history.
- It gives the child rights to his/her father's inheritance.
- It gives the father legal rights to custody or visitation and to be involved in the child's life.

## We know he's not the biological father, but he really wants to be a father to this child.

It is wonderful that he wants to be involved in the child's life. However, this is a legal document in which you are swearing to the fact that he is the biological and legal father of the child. If the biological father is unable or unwilling to provide for his child there are other options such as adoption of the child.

## If I sign the VAoP, can the father take the child away from me?

Tennessee law states that the mother is the legal custodial parent of the child, unless a court says otherwise. However, by signing the VAoP, the father will have the right to pursue formal custody or visitation through the courts.