



Importance of Establishing Paternity

Identity Only if unmarried parents acknowledge paternity will the father's information appear on the child's birth certificate.

Medical When parents acknowledge paternity, the child will have access to information about medical histories on both sides of his or her family. This is especially important in situations in which the child inherits a medical problem. Additionally, after a father completes a *Paternity Acknowledgment*, he may be able to add the child to his health insurance policy.

Father-child relationship

It is important for a child to know his or her mother and father, and to benefit from a relationship with *both* parents. Once a child is legitimized, the father is more likely to maintain his relationship with the child.

The father's extended family may also be more likely to participate in that child's life.

Adoption

When a father signs the Paternity Acknowledgment Form, his information is automatically entered in the **Putative Father Registry**.

This means that the father gains the right to be notified of any plans to have the child adopted by someone else. This provides an important safeguard for the father, the child, and prospective adoptive parents.

Custody and Visitation

If parents are unmarried at the time of a child's birth, the mother is presumed to have custody. A father cannot petition the court for custody and/or visitation until the child has been legitimized. If the father decides at a later date to seek custody and/or visitation rights, the legitimation portion is complete and will save him both time and money in the judicial process.

Support

Both parents have a responsibility to support their child, both emotionally and financially. If the parents choose to separate and paternity is already decided, it is easier for the mother to obtain child support from the father.

Financial

Acknowledging paternity potentially allows the child to qualify for important financial benefits from the father. Possibilities include social security, pension, retirement, and unemployment benefits; life insurance, veteran's benefits and inheritance rights in the event that something happens to the father.

Social Security serves as an 'insurance program for the children of workers who become seriously disabled or die.' Social Security is, in fact, the government's largest children's program, paying out roughly \$16 billion annually to child beneficiaries under age 18. More children benefit from social security than from TANF. About 3.1 million children under 18 receive benefits because a parent has died, retired or

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can no longer work because of disability. ..Social security is the primary, if not the only, source of life & disability insurance for many American families, especially those headed by younger workers and those working for low wages. Social security provides a young worker with a young spouse and two young children the equivalent of a life insurance policy with a face value of about \$400,000 and a long-term disability insurance policy with a face value of \$350,000...According to social security Administration, 3 out of 10 of today's 20-year-olds will become disabled before retirement and 1 out of 7 will die (**Intersection between Social Security & children; CLASP Article, Volume 18, No. 5/6**).

Emotional Health

According to a study conducted by The Bernard L. Pacella Parent Child Center, a "Father's responsiveness to his children and his emotional availability are key characteristics in a child's development ... Children whose fathers are available and involved have higher self-esteem, are more autonomous and self assertive. Paternal involvement seems to predict adult adjustment better than ... maternal involvement... unquestioningly, fathers can help their children develop a sense of competence, security, and self-control."

According to Stephen F. Duncan, Ph.D., Professor, Family & Human Development, at Montana State University, children who grow in up a one parent household tend to have greater depression & emotional distress, greater behavioral & learning difficulties in school, may be forced to take on adult responsibilities at early age; more likely to have lower educational & economic achievements, have difficulty forming lasting relationships... twice as likely to drop out of school or have a child before age 20; and are one and one half times as likely to be idle (out of school/work) in late teens and early 20's.

According to Ohio State University research, "Importance of Fathers in Children's Asset Development," infants whose fathers were closely involved with their care were found to be more cognitively developed at one year of age...fathers' positive and sensitive attitude toward infants were related to children's problem-solving competence later in life....children disliked by their peers reported having poor relationships w/their fathers... clearly a fathers' involvement is important to their children's intellectual and emotional development.

