

If you are married when your child is born, Vermont law automatically recognizes both parents as the legal parents.

If you are not married, the law:

- Recognizes the mother as the biological and *legal* parent
- Does not recognize the father until parentage is legally established

Establishing Parentage

You may establish parentage:

1. By voluntarily acknowledging your child's parentage.

If both parents agree, signing the attached form is the simplest way to establish legal parentage. If you know that you are not the biological parent, do not sign the acknowledgment.

2. By filing a court action to establish parentage.

If either of you has doubts about the father's identity, do not sign the attached form. Instead, you should file a court action to establish parentage in the Family Division of Superior Court.

1. Voluntarily Acknowledging Your Child's Parentage

At the hospital:

You may establish parentage at the hospital when your baby is born.

Here's how:

1. Complete the attached *Voluntary Acknowledgment of Parentage Form*.
2. Both parents sign the form in front of a witness (someone other than a parent and at least 18 years old).
3. Hospital staff add the father's information to the child's birth certificate and submit the form to the Office of Vital Records.

At a later date:

If you can't complete the form at the hospital, you may submit it later on to the Office of Vital Records. *Keep a copy for your records.*

Office of Vital Records
Department of Health
108 Cherry Street, PO Box 70
Burlington, VT 05402-0070
1-800-439-5008

When the Office of Vital Records receives your form, staff will add the father's information to your child's birth certificate. *Send your form in as soon as possible. If you submit it more than six months after your child's birth, you'll need a Probate Court decree to amend the birth certificate.*

2. Filing a Court Action

If either of you has doubts about the father's identity, file an action to establish parentage in the Family Division of Superior Court.

The court may:

- Order genetic testing if needed
- Establish legal parentage
- Establish parental rights and responsibilities

If you have questions about the process, ask the court clerk.

Establishing parentage gives a child born outside of marriage:

- a. A legal father
- b. The same legal rights as a child born to married parents

If you want to withdraw your voluntary acknowledgment:

The law allows you to withdraw (*rescind*) your voluntary acknowledgment of parentage within 60 days of signing the form or before a court hearing to establish parentage takes place—whichever happens first. If you want to do so, you must advise the Office of Vital Records in writing.

You should establish parentage because...

- Children benefit from knowing both parents
- It gives children the legal right to:
 - Get financial support from both parents
 - Inherit from both parents
 - Receive social security and veteran's dependent benefits from both parents
 - Get health and life insurance from either parent
 - Their full medical history

The Office of Child Support can help!

If you want more information or need help establishing parentage, contact the Vermont Office of Child Support (OCS).

OCS staff can answer your questions and help you understand the implications of establishing parentage.

If you apply for OCS services, we can also:

- File an action to establish parentage on your behalf
- Arrange and pay for genetic testing if needed
- Help you establish an order for child and medical support

1-800-786-3214

OCSCSU@vermont.gov

dcf.vermont.gov/ocs



Establishing Parentage

What Every New Parent Should Know



Confidential

State of Vermont Voluntary Acknowledgment of Parentage Form

Parentage creates specific legal obligations. This signed form may be used in court in support of a parentage claim. You should seek legal advice before signing this form if you have any questions or if you are confused about your rights and responsibilities. Further information about the legal rights and responsibilities of a parent is available on the back of this form.

These rights and responsibilities are serious, and you should not sign this form unless you understand them. If you need help understanding your rights and responsibilities as parents and the alternatives to, and consequences of, signing this form, call 1-800-786-3214 (or dial 2-1-1 for help in other languages).

Child's Information

Child's full name	Child's date of birth
City/town, county, and state of birth	Social Security Number (if any)

Being of sound mind and memory, voluntarily and without coercion, and of our own free will, we hereby acknowledge that we are the biological parents of this child. We understand that signing this acknowledgment is voluntary and we understand our rights and responsibilities as a parent and the alternatives to, and consequences of, signing this form.

Mother's Information

Full name	Date of birth	State of birth	Social Security Number
Mailing address (including street address, city/town, state, and zip code)			
Mother's signature	Guardian's signature if mother is a minor		
Signature of Witness* and date signed	Witnessed in (city, county, state)		

Father's Information

Full name	Date of birth	State of birth	Social Security Number
Mailing address (including street address, city/town, state, and zip code)			
Father's signature	Guardian's signature if father is a minor		
Signature of Witness* and date signed	Witnessed in (city, county, state)		

* The witness must be at least 18 years of age and not the mother or father of the child.

Important Information

Legal Parentage

If you are married when your child is born, Vermont law automatically recognizes you both as the *legal* parents. However, if you are not married when your child is born, the law:

- Recognizes the mother as the biological (and *legal*) parent of the child
- Does not recognize the father until parentage has been legally established

Establishing Parentage

You may establish parentage one of two ways:

1. **By signing this Voluntary Acknowledgment of Parentage form and filing it with the Office of Vital Records.** Do not sign this form if either of you is unsure or has any doubt about the father's identity.
2. **By filing an action in the Family Division of Superior Court.** The judge may establish legal parentage and parental rights and responsibilities; assign child and medical support obligations; and order genetic testing if needed. For further information about the court process for establishing parentage, ask the court clerk. For help establishing parentage, apply to the Vermont Office of Child Support.

What Voluntary Acknowledgment Means

By signing this *Voluntary Acknowledgment of Parentage* form, both parents accept the legal rights and responsibilities that come with being a parent. This means that:

- Either parent may seek parental rights and responsibilities (*custody*) or ask for parent-child contact (*visitation*).
- Both parents have the right to notice and a hearing before the child may be adopted.
- Both parents are responsible for financially supporting the child. Once parental rights and responsibilities are established, either parent or the Office of Child Support may file a petition to establish a child support order with the Family Division of Superior Court.

Confidentiality

The *Voluntary Acknowledgment of Parentage* form is confidential; however, it may be shared with the Office of Child Support for the purpose of initiating a parentage or child support proceeding.

Legal Representation

You may hire an attorney to advise you about the legal consequences of voluntarily acknowledging parentage and to represent you at any legal proceedings.

Withdrawing Your Voluntary Acknowledgment

The law allows you to withdraw (*rescind*) your voluntary acknowledgment of parentage within 60 days after signing or prior to a judicial determination of parentage, whichever occurs first. The rescission must be in writing and must be filed with the Department of Health at the address below.

Submitting this Form

Keep a copy of the completed form for your records. After both parents and the witnesses have signed the completed form, submit it to:

Office of Vital Records, Department of Health

108 Cherry Street, PO Box 70

Burlington, VT 05402-0070 • 1-800-439-5008

If this form is filed with the Department of Health within 6 months of the child's birth, the father's full name, date and place of birth will be added to the child's birth certificate. After 6 months from the date of birth, the child's birth certificate may be amended only by order of the Probate Court, as provided in 18 V.S.A. Section 5075(a).