



# Paternity Matters



A Publication of the San Francisco Department of Child Support Services  
First Issue of 2012

## Greetings from Catherine Sachs, San Francisco Department of Child Support Services Paternity Program Coordinator



Welcome to the second issue of Paternity Matters, the San Francisco Department of Child Support Services (SF DCSS) newsletter about the Paternity Opportunity Program (POP). In this issue, you will find information on what to do if a father is incarcerated, and about the options parents have if they want genetic testing to determine paternity. We hope you find this newsletter informative and helpful. Please remember, I am always available to provide your office or clinic with written materials and presentations on our paternity program as well as on our child support program. Please contact me directly at (415) 356-2754.

## Is the Father of the Child Incarcerated? We Can Help.

The SF DCSS can assist with getting an incarcerated father's signature on a POP declaration. If the father is incarcerated in a San Francisco County jail, including San Bruno Jail, the SF DCSS can usually arrange for a representative to obtain the father's signature. Of course, father must be willing to sign the POP declaration.

The birth clerk should first obtain and witness mother's signature, leaving space on the form for the father's witness. A representative from SF DCSS will collect the form and take it to the jail to obtain the father's signature. After the father has signed the POP, it will be returned to the birth clerk for processing. If you are a birth clerk or a mother and you need our help to get the signature of an incarcerated father, please call Catherine Sachs at (415) 356-2754 so that arrangements can be made to obtain the signature.



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### Did You Know....?

- ♦ **A declaration of paternity may be challenged in court** in the first two years after a child's birth by using blood and genetic tests that prove the man is not the biological father. If less than 60 days have passed since the signing of the declaration, a parent may submit a form to request a rescission of the declaration.
- ♦ **The only valid witness for a father who is out-of-state or out-of-country is a Notary Public** in that state or country. Hospital or government staff in other states and countries are not authorized witnesses.
- ♦ If parents sign the POP after the birth certificate has been prepared, **father's name will not automatically be added to the birth certificate.** Parents must complete additional paperwork and send payment to the State Office of Vital Records in order for the father's name to be added.

## San Francisco DCSS and SFGH: Working Together

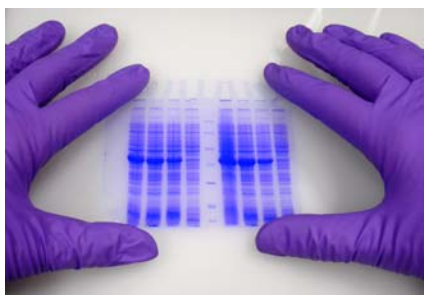
Beginning in early 2011, SF DCSS began giving presentations to expectant parents at San Francisco General Hospital's prenatal classes, which are led by Health Educator Blanca Ayala (pictured right). Ms. Ayala's classes provide expectant parents with everything they need to know about the birth process and how to properly take care of a newborn. Because SF DCSS is responsible for educating parents about the importance of establishing paternity for children born to unmarried parents, doing presentations to expectant parents is a great opportunity for us to help parents get ready to make important decisions concerning fatherhood. By learning about paternity establishment prior to giving birth, parents have more time to consider their options. We would be happy to provide presentations at your hospital or clinic. Please contact Catherine Sachs at (415)356-2754 to make arrangements.



Blanca Ayala, Health Educator at  
San Francisco General Hospital

## Genetic Testing to Establish Paternity

While many unmarried parents of newborns eagerly sign the Declaration of Paternity when their babies are born, others are hesitant because of uncertainty as to the identity of the true biological father. The San Francisco Department of Child Support Services (SF DCSS) can help such parents get genetic testing to establish paternity. Our office is mandated to



provide services to establish paternity when parents are unmarried and paternity is at issue. While genetic testing is generally free of charge to our customers, there are some requirements. Customers must open a paternity case in our office, which requires the filing of a summons and complaint with the court to establish paternity. Once this document has been filed, mother, alleged father, and child will be given appointments for DNA testing. Testing is not done by drawing blood but rather by a running a cotton swab on the inside of the mouth of each party. DNA samples are then sent to an offsite laboratory. It takes about two weeks to get the results. In general,

results will either say that the alleged father has been excluded (*not* the biological father) or that there is a greater than 99% probability that tested man is the biological father. 100% tests are not seen. After receiving a test with a 99% probability, we ask that the parents sign a Declaration of Paternity to legally establish the paternity of their child. Tests done by the SF DCSS will "hold up in court", meaning they meet the court's requirements to be legally valid. Should the test come back excluding the alleged father, our office will obtain a judgment of non-paternity on behalf of the excluded man.

### POP Statistics

The State of California keeps track of how many births occur to unwed parents in each hospital in the state. From that data, the State determines what percentage of those parents completed a POP declaration in each hospital. Completion rates for San Francisco hospitals for the years 2010 and 2011 are:

Hospital	2010	2011
CPMC	74%	77.1%
Kaiser	86%	85.7%
SFGH	78%	75%
St. Luke's	82%	82%
UCSF	74%	81.3%

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This newsletter is intended for individuals who are involved with the California Paternity Opportunity Program or who work with expectant parents. We welcome article submissions and feedback. Please contact San Francisco DCSS Paternity Coordinator Catherine Sachs by phone at (415)356-2754 or by email: [catherine.sachs@sfgov.org](mailto:catherine.sachs@sfgov.org)