



Paternity Matters

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Overcoming Challenges to Establishing Paternity

By Catherine Sachs, San Francisco Department of Child Support Services Paternity Program Coordinator

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We recently surveyed birth clerks at the five San Francisco birthing hospitals, asking about the common reasons why Declarations of Paternity sometimes do not get completed. The birth clerks responded with a wealth of information on the challenges involved in getting parents to sign a Declaration of Paternity. We want to share the most common of the challenges mentioned in the survey, as well as some solutions for overcoming those challenges.

Challenge: The parents are concerned that signing the Declaration of Paternity will jeopardize their ability to receive cash aid from the government.

Solution: Parents can call our office and we will have a confidential discussion with them about the facts concerning child support, cash aid (sometimes called “Calworks” or “welfare”), and how the two intertwine. They need not provide their names.

Challenge: The mother and the “possible” father want genetic testing.

Solution: When a mother and a “possible” father have doubts about paternity and are requesting genetic testing, they should not sign the Declaration of Paternity. Please have these parents contact us. We can discuss their options for obtaining genetic testing and for signing the Declaration of Paternity at our office after completing genetic testing.

Challenge: The parents are concerned that signing the Declaration of Paternity might affect their immigration status.

Solution: Our office specializes in establishing legal paternity, not immigration law. We cannot say whether signing a Declaration of Paternity would have a beneficial, negative, or neutral effect on a parent’s immigration status. It is understandable that parents would not want to do anything that might jeopardize their immigration status. Nonetheless, in order to make an informed decision, parents should be aware that failing to establish paternity has its own set of disadvantages. Please explain the benefits of establishing paternity so that the parents can weigh their immigration concerns against the value of establishing paternity.



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Paperless Declarations of Paternity— The Future is (Almost) Here

By Catherine Sachs, San Francisco Department of Child Support Services Paternity Program Coordinator

Wouldn't you like something that would make your job easier? If your answer is "yes", then here's some good news for you! MobileFrame, a maker of code-free mobile applications, has partnered with another Bay Area child support agency - the Contra Costa Department of Child Support Services - and the Contra Costa County Regional Medical Center to conduct a pilot program using an electronic mobile device – similar to the device used by United Parcel Service to collect digital signatures when packages are delivered – in place of paper Declarations of Paternity. The mobile application will allow hospital staff to capture parents' signatures – and all accompanying data – entirely electronically.

The benefits of the Declaration of Paternity Mobile Application are many:

- Reduced number of errors by ensuring that required sections are not left blank. The application helps to make sure that users input valid dates of birth and signature dates. The result should be fewer rejected declarations

and less time spent correcting errors.

- Less paperwork to process, sort and mail.
- Significant reduction in lag time between birth of child and the receipt of the Declaration at the California Department of Child Support Services Paternity Opportunity Program.
- Secure, confidential transmission of data; no need to worry about lost or misplaced paperwork.
- Option to take a photograph and link it to the father or mother.
- Ability to integrate with court systems and other state and county records systems.

With the Mobileframe application, hospital staff has the ability to utilize optional features of the application, such as playing an audio recording of the rights and responsibilities, viewing a video about paternity establishment, taking a photo of the family,

scanning a driver's license, and recording audio.

Additionally, the application will allow users to make significant changes to the application on their own. For instance, the Contra Costa Department of Child Support has created a Spanish version of the application and has ported it to a new tablet-size computer.



The new application offers the ability to take a photograph and link it to the father or mother

The pilot program seeks to prove that the use of the mobile, electronic device will make birth clerks' jobs easier and will eliminate nearly all errors. If the pilot program proves successful, use of the device may be implemented around the state. We will keep you posted on any new updates!

The mobile application will allow hospital staff to capture parents' signatures – and all accompanying data – entirely electronically.

CALIFORNIA Skip to: Cor
Department of Child Support Services

I have been orally informed of my rights and responsibilities.

Signature

Date

Mother Signature

Date

Witness Signature

Witness Name

Date

Hospital

Email Form

Print Report

Save

Home

The application offers users the option to scan mother's hospital wrist band and father's driver's license.

Father's Information

Scan Fathers Drivers License #

First Middle Last

Age

Date of Birth

Social Security #

Privacy Notice ☐ No SS ☐

Street

City

State

Zip

Mother's Information

Scan Mothers Wrist Band #

First Middle Last

Age

Date of Birth

Social Security #

Privacy Notice ☐ No SS ☐

Mother Street

Mother City

Mother State

Mother Zip

Child's Information

Child ID

First Middle Last

Date of Birth

☐ Male ☐ Female

Family Photo

Annotate Family Photo

Record Voice

Finger Scan

Home

Thanks to built-in safeguards, users can expect to see far fewer errors .

Fathers Information

☐ Scan Drivers License

Scan Fathers Drivers License

First Middle Last

Street Address

City State Zip

Date of Birth Social Security

☐ No SSN ☐

Age

Privacy Notice ☐

I have been orally informed of my rights and responsibilities.

Father Signature

Date

Home

Challenge – Father is incarcerated in a San Francisco Jail.

Solution: We offer a “courier” service, in which we will go to the hospital to pick up a Declaration of Paternity that has been signed by the mother. We will then visit the father in jail to obtain his signature—if he is willing—and bring it back to you. The Declaration of Paternity is usually returned to the hospital either the same day or within 48 hours of pick up.

Challenge – The father is in another state or country.

Solution: After obtaining the mother’s signature, advise the mother that she can mail the Declaration of Paternity to the father. The father can have his signature witnessed by a Notary Public, and then he can mail it back to the hospital. Because the birth certificate will probably have

been submitted without the father’s name, the parents can submit a request to amend the birth certificate to the State Office of Vital Records.

Challenge – The father does not want to sign because he fears paying child support .

Solution: We would be happy to speak to the father—confidentially—on this concern. The reality is that a Declaration of Paternity is *not needed* in order to request child support. If paternity is not established via a Declaration of Paternity, a parent can file a request to establish paternity with the court. Furthermore, the Declaration of Paternity itself is not the impetus for the opening of a child support case or court action for support. A child support case gets opened when a parent requests it, or the child’s parent or caretaker applies for and receives financial government assistance such as “welfare” or foster

care funds.

We want to thank all those who responded to this survey. The information provided has helped us understand the variety of challenges involved in establishing paternity.

If you wish to refer parents to our office for confidential consultations, the number to call is (415) 356-2754.



Need supplies? Brochures? Presentations?

**Call (415)356-2754 or
send an email to
catherine.sachs
@sfgov.org**

SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

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This newsletter is intended for individuals and birthing staff who are involved with the California Paternity Opportunity Program or who work with expectant parents. We welcome article submissions and feedback.

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Statistics

Percent of Births to Unmarried Mothers With a Declaration of Paternity

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. Below are the statistics showing the completion rates for San Francisco hospitals for the first three quarters of 2012.

HOSPITAL NAME	TIME PERIOD: 1/1/2012 - 3/30/2012	TIME PERIOD: 4/1/2012 - 6/30/2012	TIME PERIOD: 7/1/2012 - 9/30/2012
CALIFORNIA PACIFIC MEDICAL CENTER	78%	73.5%	82.6%
KAISER FOUNDATION HOSPITAL	87.4%	89.5%	86.7%
SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL HOSPITAL	77%	73%	73.8%
ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL	82.1%	82.4%	83.5%
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA MEDICAL CENTER	77.3%	84.1%	80.4%