

**Cover:**

Legal Parentage is Easy to Establish Without Going to Court – and It's Free!

**Program Profile**

The California Parentage Opportunity Program (POP) was established in 1995 to create a simple system for an unmarried mother and genetic father to establish parentage.

Effective January 1, 2020, The Uniform Parentage Act allows more people to utilize the Parentage Opportunity Program, reflecting the diversity of California families.

**What is POP?**

POP is a voluntary program for a birth parent and other parent to establish legal parentage free of charge. This significantly decreases the time and money required to establish parentage through the court process. In most cases, a signed and filed Voluntary Declaration of Parentage (VDOP) has the same force and effect as a judgment for parentage issued by a court.

**What is Parentage?**

Parentage is the recognition of a parent's legal relationship to a child.

In California a "marital presumption" applies:

In most cases, a child born into a marriage, or spouses who lived together at the time of conception and birth, is legally a child of the marriage. Please see California Family Code §7540 and §7611(a) for more information.

There are two other ways to establish legal parentage:

1. By filing a VDOP
2. Through the California court system

Get the Voluntary Declaration of Parentage witnessed at:

- Hospitals (at the time of birth)
- Local child support agency – Find yours at: [www.childsupport.ca.gov](http://www.childsupport.ca.gov)
- Local registrar of births and deaths
- Courts (Family Law Facilitator)
- Find yours at: [www.childsupport.ca.gov](http://www.childsupport.ca.gov)
- County welfare office
- Notary public

## **Completing a Voluntary Declaration of Parentage**

A VDOP may be completed only after the child's birth.

A VDOP must be completed and signed by both parents with their signatures properly witnessed and successfully filed with POP before legal parentage is established. A VDOP signed outside of California must be witnessed by a Notary Public.

The original double sided VDOP must be submitted to POP – no attachments except for a notary certification will be accepted.

## **Right to cancel the Voluntary Declaration of Parentage**

Each parent has the right to cancel (rescind) the Voluntary Declaration of Parentage (VDOP). If either parent decides to rescind the VDOP, they will need to file the form DCSS 0915 Declaration of Parentage Rescission with the POP within 60 calendar days from the latest date the VDOP was signed.

If either parent was under the age of 18 years when the VDOP was signed, the minor has 60 calendar days after they reach age 18 or become emancipated, whichever occurs first, to rescind.

After a court order for custody, visitation, or support or the 60-day rescission window has passed, either parent must go through the court's Set Aside process to cancel a filed VDOP.

Each parent has a two-year period to challenge the filed VDOP. The challenge is permitted only under limited circumstances and is barred two years after the date the VDOP is filed.

## **Who is Eligible to Complete a Voluntary Declaration of Parentage**

- An unmarried birth parent and the only possible genetic father
- or
- Two people, married or unmarried, who had this child through assisted reproduction using a sperm and/or egg donation, except if the donation was from their spouse

## **Who is Not Eligible to Complete a Voluntary Declaration of Parentage**

- Parents using surrogacy
- Parents uncertain if conception was natural or assisted
- Parents with a court order establishing parentage for the child
- Parents with a valid VDOP on file for the child
- Parents whose child has another possible parent

## **Where to mail the Voluntary Declaration of Parentage**

Mail the original, signed and witnessed VDOP to:

Parentage Opportunity Program  
P.O. Box 419070 – MS 241  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9070

Photocopies will not be accepted.

## **Benefits of Establishing Parentage**

Establishing parentage may give your child the right to:

- Social security benefits
- Military benefits
- Inheritance rights
- Health insurance
- Survivor's benefits

## **Genetic Testing**

If you would like genetic testing, request it before signing the VDOP. Genetic testing may not be requested by the parents who signed the VDOP once it has been filed.

## **Birth Certificate**

A birth certificate does not legally establish parentage.

Filing a VDOP will not change the name on a birth certificate.

For information to change the name listed on a birth certificate, contact the California Department of Public Health, Office of Vital Records at 916. 445.2684 or by email at [VRmail@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:VRmail@cdph.ca.gov).

For more information on POP  
[www.childsupport.ca.gov](http://www.childsupport.ca.gov)  
Under "Services We Offer"

Contact POP  
[askpop@dcss.ca.gov](mailto:askpop@dcss.ca.gov)  
Phone | 916.464.1982  
Fax | 916.464.5898

Hours of Service

Monday-Friday | 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Saturday -Sunday | Closed

Contact your local child support agency

866.901.3212

Toll-free (within the U.S.)

TTY | 866.399.4096