

## What are the rights of the legal father?

Once paternity is established, the father has the legal right to have a relationship with his child. The child support office does not set or monitor custody or visitation orders. Parents interested in securing orders pertaining to visitation and custody should contact a private attorney.

## What are the responsibilities of a legal father?

Both parents are required to support their child. Child support is designed to meet the needs of children while being fair to both parents. The amount of the child support order is based on the income of both parents. Child support helps to pay for things that all kids need, like food, clothing, housing, transportation, school supplies and more. Regular child support payments often make the difference between financial security and living in poverty.



## Guilford County

### Child Support

#### Greensboro

400 West Market St.

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High Point, N. C. 27260

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[www.guilfordcountync.gov/  
our-county/child-support](http://www.guilfordcountync.gov/our-county/child-support)

[www.ncchildsupport.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.ncchildsupport.ncdhhs.gov)

# PATERNITY

*Here's What You Need  
To Know*



## Guilford County Child Support

*"Making a difference in the lives  
of the children we serve"*

# Establishing Paternity

## WHAT IS PATERNITY ESTABLISHMENT?

Paternity means fatherhood. Establishing paternity is the process for determining the legal father of the child.

## WHY SHOULD I ESTABLISH PATERNITY?

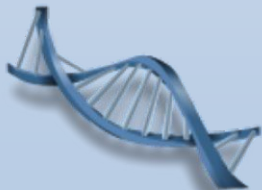
Your child receives the benefits that come from having two legal parents, including:

- ✓ The father's name on the child's birth certificate
- ✓ Knowledge of medical histories of both parents
- ✓ Social Security benefits
- ✓ Inheritance rights
- ✓ A relationship with both parents

## WHAT IS GENETIC TESTING?

Genetic testing is the process of comparing the genetic code of a child, the child's mother and the alleged father to determine if the man can be excluded from being the father of the child. Genetic DNA tests are used to determine the probability that a man is the biological father of the child. Either parent may request testing, or the court may order.

The process for securing genetic material (DNA) to test is really quite simple. In most



cases, testing is done using cells from the inside of the mouth which are collected with a cotton swab called a "buccal swab".

## WHEN DOES A MAN BECOME A LEGAL FATHER?

- ✓ **Marriage** – If the parents are married at the time the child is born, legal paternity is established.
- ✓ **Voluntary Affidavit of Parentage**– Unmarried parents may sign a form agreeing that they are the child's parents. This may be done in the hospital when the child is born. This form is notarized. Before signing a legal document establishing paternity, the parents may want to have genetic testing to confirm that they are the child's parents.
- ✓ **Court Order** – Paternity may be determined by a court. For alleged fathers, it is very important to actively participate and cooperate in this process. If the alleged father does not respond or appear in court when a hearing is set, the court can enter a default order for paternity and support. The court accepts the information contained in the Complaint to Establish Paternity and Support as true and issues an order to pay child support and provide health care coverage based on that information.

## HOW DOES THE COURT PROCESS WORK?

First, the alleged father receives a Civil Summons and Complaint to Establish Paternity and Child Support. He can respond to the Summons and Complaint either by:

- ✓ Filing an answer with the Clerk of Court;
- ✓ Contacting the child support office to request genetic testing;
- ✓ Contacting the child support office to voluntarily acknowledge paternity by signing an affidavit and voluntary support agreement;
- ✓ Getting an attorney who will help him respond to the Petition; or
- ✓ Appearing at the hearing.

