

If you are a teenaged single mother or are expecting a baby, you should know that your child has a right to be taken care of financially by **both** parents even if the child lives with only one of his parents. The financial obligation of the parent who lives apart from his child is called *child support*.



This pamphlet describes how you can get child support. **It assumes the child's parents are not married, not living together, and that the child lives with his mother most of the time.**

Fortunately, many fathers realize one of the great joys of fatherhood is being able to contribute to their children's well-being and security. A father's financial support of his children is one important way to show love and concern, and children know that. Fathers should be encouraged to share in their children's upbringing in this way.

Some fathers are unable to support their children. Perhaps they will be able to later on. Others can, but won't. He may argue about it, try to avoid it, or pay less than he can afford. A court can order a father to pay regular child support.

To start the process of getting a child support order, call Child Support Enforcement at 1-800-228-KIDS. If you apply for Temporary Family Assistance (TFA or state welfare), this process starts automatically.

Child support may not be enough money to take care of your child. You may need to apply for State assistance in order to support yourself and your child.

Can I get support enforcement services from the State if I do not get welfare?

Yes, the State must provide the same help to parents who do not receive welfare as to those who do. To get this help, call Child Support Enforcement tollfree at 1-800-228-KIDS.

Why establish paternity?

Once a man is legally determined to be the father of a child, he has certain rights and responsibilities of fatherhood. He must support that child according to his financial ability. In addition, the child could inherit from the father's estate or be entitled to receive Social Security dependent's benefits on the father's account if the father dies or becomes disabled. And, the child benefits from knowing who his relatives are. Not only is there a psychological benefit, but it could be very helpful to have access to medical histories of relatives. Once paternity is established, the father is in a better position to exercise rights to visitation and custody. If the parents do not agree about these issues, they might need to return to court to resolve visitation and custody disagreements.

Can I get support and State assistance at the same time?

Yes, but some of the child support you receive will reduce the amount of your State assistance check. It works like this. Your Temporary Family Assistance (TFA or State assistance) is a set amount, depending on the number of children you have. Once support is established, you will also get a check for the full amount of the current support order. The first \$100 of child support you receive each month will not reduce your TFA check. Amounts more than \$100 per month will reduce your TFA check dollar for dollar. This means that if you get \$120 in child support, your TFA will be reduced by \$20. (The first \$100 is overlooked, and then it is dollar for dollar reduction).



Can I get TFA without also trying to get child support?

No, unless you fit within the exceptions discussed below. When you apply for TFA, you give the state your right to get child support. This is called an assignment.

You can be exempted from being required to give information about the father for one of the following reasons:

- the father lied to you about his identity or other information,
- you are unable to remember or get the information about the father because of a mental impairment
- you are a victim of domestic violence, or
- you have another "good faith" reason for not being able to provide the information about the father.

Will paternity be determined at the hospital?

When you are in the hospital with your infant, you and the father (if he is there) will be asked if you want to acknowledge that you are the parents of the child. If you agree, and complete the forms offered, a legal determination of paternity is made, just as if the court decided who the father was.

You should be sure you understand this before agreeing to sign. New parents tend to be excited about the birth. So this may be an important opportunity, but the intense emotion of this time may also be a reason not to sign if you have any doubts.

What steps will the State take to establish support and make sure orders are paid?

The process starts with the State getting information from you as it needs the father's name and social security number. Certain other types of information, such as make of car, or employer, can be given if you don't know his social security number. If you apply for

Legal Services Offices

TFA, you will be required to give this information unless you fit within certain exceptions.

The State then tries to find the father and ask if he agrees he is the father. If he does not agree, the State offers blood testing to determine whether he is the father. If there is no agreement, a court case will be started and the court will decide.

Once paternity is established, a court order will be set, based on his and your earnings. The order will require that payments come directly from his paycheck. The State has many other ways of enforcing support such as attaching lawsuit winnings, unemployment compensation, bank accounts and other sources of money. The State can also threaten jail or revoke a driver's license if someone does not pay support.

Things to consider:

- ✓ **Paternity is much easier to establish close to the time of the child's birth.** As time passes, it may be harder to find the father. Even if the father has no ability to pay support now, he may later, so establishing paternity can help financially down the road.
- ✓ **Statutory rape.** If you were between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, and the father was two or more years older than you at the time the child was conceived, the father could be referred for prosecution for statutory rape if you apply for welfare or child support services.
- ✓ **Visitation and custody.** Both parents may have claims for visitation and custody with or without a legal paternity determination. A support action does not address custody and visitation, and you may need to address these issues in a separate court case.

Statewide Legal Services:

(860) 344-0380 (Central Conn.
and Middletown area)
1-800-453-3320 (All other regions)

Other Legal Services Programs:

Hartford, Hartford County:

Greater Hartford Legal Assistance

*(Serving Hartford County and the
City of Hartford)*

80 Jefferson Street
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 541-5000
FAX: (860) 541-5050
A.D. Higgin School
47 N. Main Street
Bristol, CT 06082
(860) 541-5000

Greater New Haven Area:

New Haven Legal Assistance Association, Inc.

426 State Street
New Haven, CT 06510
(203) 946-4811
TDD: (203) 946-4811
FAX: (203) 498-9271

Throughout Connecticut:

Statewide Legal Services

(See above)

Connecticut Legal Services:

Administrative Office

(860) 344-0447

211 State Street

Bridgeport, CT 06604
(203) 336-3851

Connecticut Legal Services continued...

587 Main Street
New Britain, CT 06051
(860) 225-8678

153 Williams Street
New London, CT 06320
(860) 447-0323

20 Summer Street
Stamford, CT 06901
(203) 348-9216

85 Central Avenue
Waterbury, CT 06722
(203) 756-8074

872 Main Street
P.O. Box 258
Willimantic, CT 06226
(860) 456-1761

Legal Assistance to Medicare Patients

872 Main Street, P.O. Box 258
Willimantic, CT 06226
(860) 456-1761

AIDS Legal Network for Connecticut

80 Jefferson Street
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 541-5040 or
1-888-380-3646

Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut

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A Teenaged Mother's Guide to Child Support