

# A Father's Rights



## Paternity

You might have to prove that you are the father of your child before you have rights as a parent. You do not need to prove you are the father if

- you were married to your child's mother when she became pregnant with your child, or
- you both signed a paternity form at the hospital or at the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS).

If you and the child's mother do not agree about who the father is, the court might tell you to take a paternity test. Once you have proven that you are your child's father, you have the right to see your child and the duty to pay child support.

## Child Support

You have the right to see your child even if you are behind on child support. Your child support order is not related to your visitation rights.

You also have the right to change your child support order if your income or your child's mother's income has changed.

Sometimes when the court first enters a child support order in a child support or paternity case, the court can order past due (or *retroactive*) child support to also be paid, for up to three (3) years in the past. This doesn't happen in every case, but it might happen if the mother or the State of Connecticut asks for it.

## Safety

If you believe your child is unsafe, you can contact the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) at 1-800-842-2288.

## Visitation and Custody

You have the right to see your child. Some parents can work out a visitation schedule without having to go to court, but the court cannot enforce a visitation schedule that was never approved by a judge. If you cannot work out a visitation schedule with your child's mother, or if the visitation schedule you agreed to is being disobeyed or changed by one parent without agreement, you should ask the court for help.

You must also ask the court if you want some or total custody of your child. The court will decide who should have custody based on your child's best interests. If you have some legal custody of your child, you have the right to help decide things about your child's education, religion, and medical care.

## Adoption

You can stop the mother of your child from putting the child up for adoption

## Moving

Your child's mother cannot take your child and move far away without permission from you or the court. If you or your child's mother need to move, the court will decide custody and visitation based on the child's best interests.

**Tip:** To speak to an attorney, call Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320 or the Children's Law Center hotline at 1-888-529-3667.

*This information is based on laws in Connecticut as of 10/2022. It is not intended as legal advice for an individual situation. Please call Statewide Legal Services or contact an attorney for additional help. [www.ctlawhelp.org](http://www.ctlawhelp.org)*