



POP

PERSPECTIVES

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A Message From...

Francine Woods,
DCSS Chief, Customer & Community Services

One of the primary goals of the Customer and Community Services Branch of the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) is to form quality partnerships in the community so that all children in California will have the opportunity to receive the financial, medical and emotional support necessary for them to grow into productive adults. The partnerships that have been formed in the Paternity Opportunity Program (POP) have become a model for other DCSS partnerships to emulate. The dedication and efforts of the staff of California's birthing hospitals and clinics in conjunction with state and local DCSS staff have been the foundation upon which POP has been built.

On behalf of the Department of Child Support Services, I would like to salute and thank all of our partners in hospitals, vital records, social services, and the judicial system for making POP a great success for the parents and the more than 750,000 children who have had paternity established through POP. Keep up the great work!

NEW "POP" POLICY FOR TROOPS

New Declaration of Paternity Policy Designed to Help Deployed Military Personnel

The California Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) has issued a new Declaration of Paternity policy to help military personnel under deployment orders to establish paternity of their children while on assignment. The policy took effect in April 2003.

The new policy allows unmarried military personnel who have received deployment orders that will prevent them from being present at their child's birth to sign a notarized declaration of paternity form in absentia. However, the notarized declaration must be in the hands of the mother prior to the child's birth. When the child is born, the mother signs a form authorizing the hospital to put the father's name on the child's birth certificate using the notarized declaration as verification. This process avoids the need to amend a child's birth certificate, which can take up to ten months. The new policy also increases the efficiency of the paternity establishment process.

Prior to the implementation of the new policy, both parents were required to be present for the signing of the paternity declaration causing a hardship on parents who had been deployed who wanted to claim paternity.

Establishment of paternity is critical to ensuring that the children of military personnel have

access to medical coverage and service benefits. In order to qualify their children for military medical and service benefits, military personnel must provide proof of paternity AND a certified copy of the child's birth certificate with their name listed as a parent.



The new policy was distributed by DCSS to birthing hospitals, local child support agencies, vital records agencies, county family law offices and social service agencies with the specification that it only applies to military personnel with deployment orders. All other parents using a Declaration of Paternity form are required to complete it AFTER the child is born. For more information, contact a State POP analyst at (866) 249-0773.



DO YOUR PART TO HELP CALIFORNIA SAVE ENERGY
For energy saving tips, visit the DCSS website at www.childsup.cahtw.net.gov

See the POP Newsletter online at www.childsup.ca.gov

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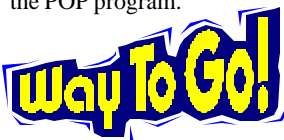
Raquel Lister

Raquel Lister, Yolo County DCSS POP Coordinator, has been a Yolo County employee for nearly 26 years. During this time she has raised two children, earned a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, become a grandmother of two and has found time to travel and play bunco with her husband of 30 years.

For the past three years one of Raquel's duties has been POP Coordinator. She has set up training for hospitals, social services, and staff in her office on how to properly witness and file the paternity declaration. Raquel makes an effort to get to know key POP personnel at the hospitals. She finds it really helps to be on a first name basis with the hospital staff. This eliminates some of the obstacles that may prevent her from getting answers for questions she may have. Most importantly, she provides staff with her name and telephone number and lets them know she can be reached at any time.

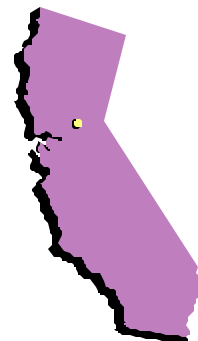
"POP has been a good experience for me and I can see the many benefits it provides for the children of our community. The paternity declaration is a very important document in our society," said Raquel.

Raquel's attention to detail and desire to keep staff informed is what makes her an asset to Yolo County and the POP program.



On Behalf of Stanislaus County DCSS...

Stanislaus County DCSS Conducts Survey of Dads who Sign Declarations of Paternity To Better Understand Their Needs



At the request of the Department of Child Support Services of Stanislaus County, four hospitals in the San Joaquin Valley completed a recent survey of fathers who signed declarations of paternity to determine how to better serve them. Busy hospital staff at Doctors Medical Center and Memorial Medical Center in Modesto, Emanuel Medical Center in Turlock, and Oak Valley District Hospital in Oakdale graciously agreed to conduct the survey.

The overwhelming majority of the 239 fathers who participated in the survey said they believe they would eventually marry their child's mother. The majority of those surveyed were between the ages of 18 and 35 years old with limited education. The majority said they intended to financially support their children, although half had not completed high school and the average monthly earning was below \$1,500.

More than 98% of the fathers said it was important to them that their name appear on their children's birth certificates, and more than 80% indicated that they would live with their children if given the opportunity.

Of particular interest to Stanislaus County DCSS staff was the fact that 80% of the survey participants said they had received no employment assistance even though Stanislaus County has formed career centers to assist them with job training, legal and financial challenges and reduction in employment barriers.

For more information about the survey, contact Joyce Fischer of the Stanislaus County Department of Child Support Services at (209) 558-8752.



From Shelley Peter Social Worker at O'Connor Hospital in Santa Clara County

I would like to give an example of the extraordinary work done by one of the angels in the Santa Clara County Department of Child Support Services. Not only does her name, Angelica Pedrozo, literally mean "angel-like," her actions confirm this. Several months ago, after many dead-end phone calls, after being referred to this person and the next person again and again, I was cheered by the receptive voice of Angelica. I was searching for a way to help a young woman, Silvia, dying of cancer get her wish to have William, the father of her young children, get his name on the birth certificates. As this family from San Salvador was not documented, they had some fears about dealing with the system, especially at this critical time. I knew that William was exhausted and overwhelmed from trying to work to support his family, care for his bedridden wife and two small children, Ashly, three and Jafet, one. I honestly didn't know how he could go to one more office or appointment or face another piece of red tape.

It was at this point of despair that Angelica stepped in. She said this story touched her heart and she took the case on personally. She was willing to drive to the hospital on several occasions to meet with this couple to hand carry the necessary forms, and to also cry with and give emotional support, to this family. I know Silvia felt such relief that she would have no worries about the custody of her children after her death. She was not able to realize her dream of marrying William, but I know she felt loved and cared for and knew he would carry her spirit on through the children as their rightful father. I cannot thank Angelica enough for her selfless work. She more than exemplifies our core value at O'Connor: compassionate service.

ASK POP

1. I know I signed something to establish paternity 10 years ago when my son was born, but the state says there is no POP document on file. What did I sign and how do I get a copy of it?

The document you signed was likely a court stipulation establishing paternity. This means that you were identified as the father of a named child and an action was filed in the court to establish paternity. You agreed that you were the father of the named child and signed a stipulation. This stipulation was filed with the court establishing you as the legal father of the child. You should check with the court where the stipulation was filed to get a copy of it.



2. I need to establish paternity for my 3-year-old. How much does it cost to file and receive a copy of a paternity declaration?

There is no charge to file or obtain a certified copy of a filed declaration of paternity form from the California Department of Child Support Services. Blank forms can be obtained from local child support agencies, family law facilitators, vital records or social services.



3. When my baby was born I left the father's name blank on the birth certificate. How can I get the father's name on the birth certificate before my daughter starts school next year?

You must file a birth certificate amendment form with the State Office of Vital Records. If you were married when the child was conceived, you will also need to send along a copy of your marriage certificate. If you were not married and you have signed a declaration of paternity, file an Application to Amend a Birth Record – Acknowledgement of Paternity (Form VS 22) with a copy of a Declaration of Paternity. If you have established paternity in court, file an Application to Amend a Birth Record – Adjudication of Fact of Parentage (Form VS 21) with the copy of the paternity judgment from the court. Forms VS 21 and VS 22 are available from state and local Offices of Vital Records. There is a \$20.00 fee to amend a birth record.

4. I want to take responsibility for my child and establish legal paternity but the mother is not willing to sign a POP form. What can I do?

Because the other parent is not willing to sign a POP form, you will need to establish paternity in court. You may contact a private attorney, your local child support agency or the family law facilitator's office in your county of residence for assistance.



5. My baby's father is in jail and I want to take the POP form to him so he can sign. Can a correctional officer witness the form for us?

NO. A correctional officer is not authorized by law to witness an inmate's signing of a paternity form, unless the correctional officer is a notary public. Only employees of certain agencies are authorized by law to witness the signing of a declaration of paternity. The inmate must sign the POP form before a notary public. Most county jails and state prisons have programs where notaries are available to inmates.

Askpop@dcss.ca.gov



FOCUS
On
Hospitals

Maria Torres and Tina Diaz have been a strong POP team at **Central Valley General Hospital** in Hanford (Kings County) for the past three years. Together they make sure unmarried parents get the information necessary to make the right choice in establishing paternity for their children. They provide oral information so the parents are fully informed of their rights and responsibilities with regard to paternity. Maria says it is the mission of the hospital and their unit to make sure all parents are treated with kindness and respect. The hospital so strongly believes in this mission that all patients receive a survey to ensure they have been treated correctly.

Maria and Tina both have tremendous enthusiasm for their jobs and credit their supervisor, Kris Johnson, Director of Women's Services, as being very supportive of them.

The money received from the Local Child Support Agency for correctly filed declarations goes directly to the Women's Services Section. A portion of the money has been used to purchase lap top computers for Maria and Tina. As a result, Maria and Tina can be more efficient and accurate in their job.

"We love our jobs - especially when we help parents by providing them with the opportunity to help their children's future by establishing paternity."





Lights, Camera, POP

There are many ways to use technology to reach POP customers and partners. In recent months, we have seen a few examples of how technology and the media can help to get the POP message out.

Contra Costa County DCSS POP Coordinator, Caroline Kelley, used some creativity to get POP training videos to local hospitals and agencies. Caroline used a grant from the local bar association to make copies of the POP training videos. She distributed them to local hospitals and agencies who attended the training session in Martinez on September 30, 2002. In addition, Caroline arranged for the POP parents' video to be shown regularly on the local public access cable channel.

In Santa Clara County, a POP forum was held on October 23, 2002, and was covered by the local Spanish language television station. The station featured a report about the POP forum on its evening news report. The favorable coverage helped to get the POP message to the Spanish-speaking audience in the Silicon Valley.

In 2003, the California Department of Child Support Services is planning to use video conferences to reach the local POP coordinators, hospital and agencies who may not be able to travel to POP meetings and training sessions.

POP Hits Record Highs



Left to right: Toni Hyde (SDCDCSS), Curtis L. Child (DCSS), Steven Winsett (Dad), Lori Ryan (Mom), Dr. Thomas L. Boardman (SDCDCSS), Henrietta Steele (SDCDCSS)

Since its inception, the Paternity Opportunity Program has filed over 845,000 paternity declarations. On August 21, 2002 POP celebrated the 750,000th signing by having a news conference to announce the milestone. Sharp Mary Birch Hospital in San Diego hosted the event and welcomed Curtis L. Child, DCSS Director, Dr. Thomas L. Boardman, Director of San Diego County DCSS (SDCDCSS) and several staff members from DCSS, SDCDCSS and Sharp Mary Birch Hospital for Women.

"Given the opportunity, fathers will contribute to the lives of their children," said Director Child. "We provide fathers that opportunity through the POP Program."

Parents, Steven Winsett and Lori Ryan, signed the 750,000th paternity declaration and posed for the media. The family was given a basket full of gifts including a POP monogrammed receiving blanket. (Check out our website for pictures of the news conference.)

Dan Gross, CEO of Sharp Mary Birch Hospital for Women said, "as a committed community partner, we recognized the value of the Paternity Opportunity Program not only here, but throughout the state."

POP thanks all the hospital and county POP Coordinators who really make this program work and we look forward to hitting ONE MILLION soon!!!

POP On The Road



The DCSS Paternity Opportunity Program analysts made training a priority in 2002. Training was conducted for hospitals and public agencies in 23 counties. This represents more than 80% of the hospitals and agencies that provide the voluntary paternity establishment process in California.

The partnership between the state and local child support agencies set up on-site training venues, sent out invitational letters and jointly conducted the sessions for the hospitals and agency staff. The sessions provided information on the latest POP procedures, forms and laws. The hospital staff had the opportunity to have all of their questions answered while state and local DCSS staff heard first-hand the concerns and suggestions of the people on the front lines of the program.

The sessions also strengthened the teamwork attitude and the sense of cooperation that is one of the real strong points of POP. In addition to hospital and agency training sessions, the family law facilitators and court commissioners participated in a POP workshop in San Francisco at the Judicial Council's annual conference in September.

If your hospital or agency is interested in participating in a training session in 2003, please contact your state or local DCSS POP Coordinator.



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