



**P A T E R N I T Y
O P P O R T U N I T Y
P R O G R A M**

POP Perspectives

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A Message From...

**Your POP Team;
Wanda Abney,
Jim Mullany, and
Elena Palmi**

On behalf of DCSS and the more than 900,000 children who have had paternity established through the Paternity Opportunity Program, the members of the DCSS POP Team would like to sincerely thank all hospital birth unit staff and public agency staff for your dedication and hard work in establishing legal paternity through the Declaration of Paternity process. Those of us who work in POP realize that this program would not work without you. We hear from parents every day who use their POP forms to enroll their children in health plans, gain eligibility for social security and receive dependent benefits. POP really works and it does help children.

The POP Team wants it known that although you may not see the direct results of your work, we do! The success of POP has been a great team effort and we appreciate your contribution!



POP INFORMING MADE EASY

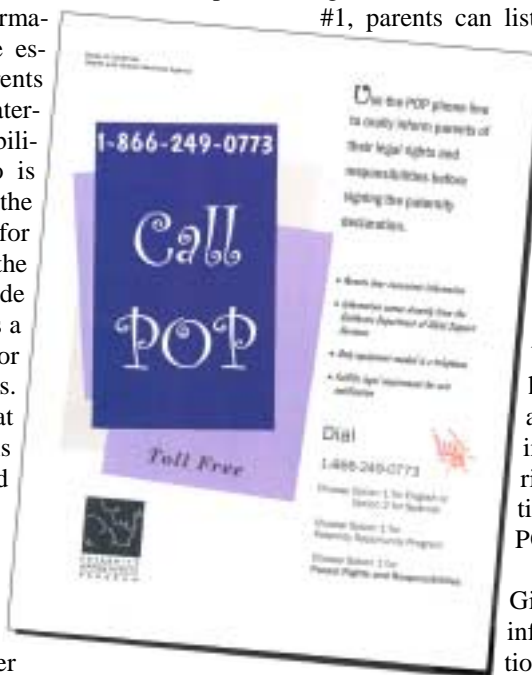
The California Department of Child Support Services has issued new POP videos in English and Spanish to all hospitals and local child support agencies. The informational videos provide the essential information parents must know about their paternity rights and responsibilities. The English video is the latest revision of the presentation "Providing for Your Child" while the Spanish video "El Poder de 2 (The Power of Two)" is a federal video intended for Spanish speaking parents. Both videos explain what paternity is and why it is important for unmarried parents and their children.

A limited number of videos are available for agencies who are required by law to administer POP. Requests to obtain a copy of the videos may be sent to your POP Analyst via e-mail or phone (see the back page of this Newsletter for numbers).

A second source of parental informing is now available on the POP toll free phone line. By calling (866) 249-0773 and choosing option #1, parents can listen to a recording of

their paternity rights and responsibilities prior to signing a declaration of paternity form. This new feature was added at the suggestion of a hospital birth clerk who said that most birth clerks do not have sufficient time available to orally inform parents of their rights and responsibilities before signing a POP form.

Giving parents proper information and education is one of the key elements of POP. We welcome the suggestions of hospital and public agency staff on ways to assist them in getting paternity information to parents.



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

Inside this issue:

3 Digit Code	2
Spotlight	2
Ask POP	3
POP Puzzle	4



Joyce Fischer

Joyce Fischer, the longtime POP Coordinator for the Stanislaus County Department of Child Support Services, retired in August after 39 years of county service. Joyce had the distinction of being the longest continuing local POP coordinator in California (having started with the program back in 1995 when the program went statewide). Joyce was a tireless advocate for POP and was very active in conducting outreach and education in Stanislaus County. She was especially fond of making presentations at local schools about the perils and responsibilities that went with teen parenting. Joyce believes POP has been responsible for many young fathers coming forward and accepting responsibility for their children. She considers education the key to young people making informed decisions.

Joyce's passion for education is reflected in her retirement plans. She hopes to substitute teach at the third grade level. She believes that teaching children at a young age is where one can have a great impact on the decisions they make later in life. On a personal level, Joyce wants to spend her extra time with her grandchildren Cameron, Ian and Seth.

We offer Joyce our thanks for her many years of dedicated service to the children of Stanislaus County and wish her all the best in her retirement.



Where Are my pop forms?

Saying hospital birth clerks have a lot to do is an understatement. The last thing the DCSS POP Team wants is to have them spending time trying to find out what happened to their POP forms order. Unfortunately, that is exactly what has happened in recent months. The DCSS POP Analysts have made it a priority to find out why the orders have been delayed.



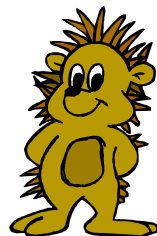
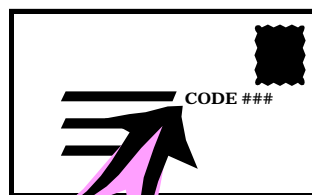
The current process is for birth clerks to place an order directly with the State Printer's Warehouse via FAX or mail. Our research has shown that some delays were caused by the lack of a state budget throughout July. Staff at the State Printer were having to address many printing issues throughout the state. This meant that for a period of time, staff were not available to process the orders. Now that the state budget has been resolved this should no longer be the problem.

Here are some of the other possible reasons POP orders may be delayed:

1. The hospital is using an outdated order form and sending orders to the wrong place. **The current FAX number for orders is (916) 445-9134.** Orders to other numbers will be delayed or lost.
2. Hospitals are not allowing sufficient time for orders to be filled. The form says to allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of orders. Some hospitals are expecting delivery within a week and as a result are running out of forms. **Please allow sufficient time for orders to be delivered.**
3. Orders are delivered to the hospital but do not make it to the birthing unit or medical records section. This is the most common reason for delays. **When there is a delay, please check with the hospital unit that receives packages, to make sure it has not been delivered to the wrong place.**

DCSS will be looking closely at the forms ordering process and at our contract with the State Printer to see if any changes or improvements can be made to ensure prompt service to hospitals.

Do you Know your 3 digit code?



Every California birthing hospital and public agency that is authorized as a witness for POP has been assigned a three-digit code as a unique identifier. This code is very important in helping DCSS track and record all POP forms filed in the state. We urge all hospitals and public agencies to include their three-digit code on the outer envelope whenever mailing original POP forms to the DCSS – POP Unit.

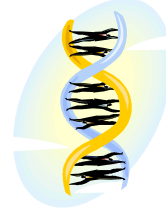
Using the three-digit code ensures that the form will be quickly and properly filed by the POP vendor and will enable it to be easily identified whenever the form is requested. A delay of even one day in getting the form filed may mean a great deal for the child and family when it comes to potential eligibility for benefits.

We realize with turnover in personnel at hospitals and public agencies, some staff who process POP forms may not be aware of their organization's three digit code. If you don't know your three-digit code, please contact your state POP Analyst listed at the end of this newsletter.

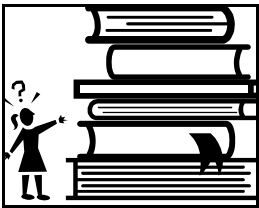
ASK POP

1. *I'm not certain that I'm the father, so I do not want to sign a POP form until I have a paternity test. How can I find out about getting a paternity test?*

Check either the internet or local phone directory for laboratories that perform paternity or genetic testing. Like any other consumer choice, there are different prices for services offered by these labs. You should compare the prices and services offered and choose the one that best meets your needs. Currently, most labs use a swab test to obtain sample DNA from the mouth of the mother, child and potential father. You may also contact your local child support agency for information on paternity establishment.



2. *We keep hearing that a POP form cannot be signed when the mother is married. Why can't a married mom who has been separated from her husband for years sign a form with the man she knows is the father?*



First, California law says that the voluntary declaration of paternity is only for cases in which the mother is NOT married. The reason for this is paternity law is very complex. To protect the rights of the mother, husband and other man involved, the matter must be handled by the judicial system. Neither hospital nor agency representatives, faced with a situation of a married mother wanting to sign the form, knows all of the facts of her situation and how the law applies to those facts. Therefore, a married mother should never be allowed to sign a declaration of paternity form.

3. *A parent came into our hospital wanting a copy of a paternity form they signed last year. They said they had requested a copy from the DCSS POP Unit but one could not be located. Why was the form not located by DCSS and what can these parents do?*

All POP forms are reviewed for completeness and correctness before they are filed with DCSS. If the form is incomplete, it is marked "invalid" and is not filed in the DCSS database. Parents are notified by letter and are given information on how to submit a corrected form. Some parents chose not to submit a corrected form, while others have moved from the address they provided on the POP forms. Therefore, a valid form would not be available. Other instances may involve the hospital sending the POP form to the wrong place. On rare occasions, if a parent has a clear copy of the form they completed, the DCSS POP Unit may certify it as a valid form and file it in the database.

4. *A father who had signed a POP form at the time of birth of the child learned through genetic tests that he is not the father. It is more than 60 days since he signed the POP declaration, what can he do now to get the form set aside and have his name removed from the child's birth certificate?*



If it has been less than two years since the birth of the child, he can file a petition with the superior court to have the POP declaration set aside. This is a legal process in which the father states he now has evidence he is not the biological father and wants the court to set aside the form. He should either check with the Superior Court in his county or he can obtain excellent information about this process on the California Judicial Council's website at WWW.COURTINFO.CA.GOV. Under the self help section, there is information about what form he must file and how the set aside process works. With regard to the birth record, he must obtain a court order to have his name removed from the birth certificate and request an amendment from the State Office of Vital Records.



FOCUS On Hospitals

Donna Olivieri

started working with the POP program in March of 1999 at General Hospital in Eureka, CA. When General Hospital discontinued their birthing facility and was purchased by St. Joseph Hospital, she was able to continue working in POP as the Vital Statistics Clerk.

Donna strongly believes in the POP program and is always willing to go the extra mile to help parents. She has even made special arrangements with the local jail for parents in custody. Donna personally takes the paperwork to the jail and witnesses the parent's signature. By going the extra mile, a child can then have his or her father's name added to the birth certificate.

Donna says she sees the POP program as "very valuable to the children in our County and it helps to protect their rights."

Donna personally delivers paternity information to all mothers after they deliver. If a mom is unmarried, she arranges for the mom to watch the video and is available to answer any questions.



The
Extra
Mile

Askpop@dcss.ca.gov

POP in 28 places at One time



On June 26, 2003, the Department of Child Support Services presented a POP video conference workshop to more than 50 local child support agency POP coordinators at 28 sites throughout California. This first-time event originated at the DCSS headquarters in Rancho Cordova. The centerpiece of the presentation was the introduction of the new POP Desk Manual that had been issued to all POP birthing hospital and local child support agency coordinators.

Following a welcome greeting by Francine Woods, the Branch Chief of the Customer and Community Services Branch, participants were treated to interactive presentations. Michael Coleman, DCSS manager of the POP Unit, was the “in studio” facilitator of the workshop. State POP coordinators Jim Mullany, Wanda Smith and Elena Palmi made presentations about POP training, policies, procedures and the organization of the Desk Manual. Jonathan Pritt, of Sy Tech Solutions, along with assistance from Sam Velasquez and Judy Elias presented information about the processing of POP forms and POP requests. Lee Morhar, Chief Legal Counsel of DCSS, addressed POP legal issues in his presentation. An extended question, answer and discussion period ensured that issues and questions were thoroughly addressed.

Evaluations received for this first foray in the land of video conferencing have been very positive. There were a few minor glitches during the three hour broadcast, but they were quickly resolved. If you would like more information about the POP video conference please contact your state POP Analyst.

POP Puzzle

<p><u>Across</u></p> <p>1 Means Fatherhood</p> <p>2 Parent signatures need this</p> <p>3 Paternity Opportunity Program</p> <p>4 10 items are ____ to have a paternity declaration successfully filed with DCSS and be considered valid.</p>	<p><u>Down</u></p> <p>1 Paternity means this</p> <p>2 A rescission will do this to a paternity declaration</p> <p>3 Only these women can sign a paternity declaration</p> <p>4 Giving birth makes you this</p> <p>5 Usually charge a fee to witness</p> <p>6 Department of Child Support Services</p>
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POP QUIZ – Test Your POP IQ



1. What hospital submitted the most POP forms January through July 2003?
2. What were the first three California counties to participate in POP?
3. At what facility was the first POP form signed in California?
4. What college in California developed the POP logo?
5. True or False – The Social Security Administration will accept a POP form as proof of a child’s eligibility for survivors benefits.
6. What state agency originally had responsibility for filing all POP forms?

Your State POP Team

Wanda Abney (916) 464-5170
 Wanda.abney@dcss.ca.gov
 Jim Mullany (916) 464-5482
 Jim.mullany@dcss.ca.gov
 Elena Palmi (916) 464-5164
 Elena.palmi@dcss.ca.gov

*Department of Child Support Services
 P.O. Box 419064
 Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9064
 FAX (916) 464-5065*

State of California
 Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor
 Department of Child Support Services
 Curtis L. Child, Director



POP Quiz Answers:

1.. Pomona Valley Medical Center (LA County) – (1,147 POP forms); 2. Humboldt, Nevada and Los Angeles Counties; 3. General Hospital in Eureka, California; 4. California State University, Chico; 5. True; 6. The State Office of Vital Records

