



# POP Perspectives

A publication of the California Department of Child Support Services (DCSS)

Spring 2005

## A MESSAGE FROM...

**Greta Wallace,  
Director**

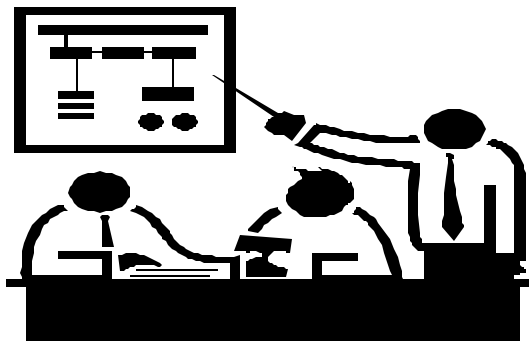
As the newly appointed director of the Department of Child Support Services, I am excited to be involved in managing California's Paternity Opportunity Program (POP). As an administrative law judge, I saw many instances where early paternity establishment was critical to the health and well-being of children. POP is a program that really helps children by linking them legally to both parents from the beginning of their lives. Last year was a milestone year for POP, as the one millionth paternity was established. This program would not work without the hard work and dedication of hospital and agency POP coordinators.

Thank you all for helping parents and more than one million children who have had paternity established through POP.



## POP JOINS WORKSHOPS

Last year the Paternity Opportunity Program (POP) joined forces with the State Office of Vital Records (OVR) to participate in Regional Training Workshops throughout California.



The informative workshops were coordinated by Melissa Reyes, Supervisor at OVR, to give local birth clerks, recorders and registrars the opportunity to hear the latest information about birth recording and POP. The initial round of 11 workshops in 2004 were so well-received another series is planned for 2005 with the first session slated for May 10th in Fresno.

For POP analysts Wanda Abney, Jim Mullany and Elena Palmi, the workshops are an excellent opportunity to present POP updates, answer questions and meet face-to-face with the staff that are so important to the success of POP. The format of the sessions promotes sharing between participants and is the perfect environment to ensure the efforts of both state agencies are coordinated.

This year the POP staff is planning to present information on problem areas that keep POP forms from being filed in a timely manner. The focus will range from incomplete or erroneous information to the use of agency codes.

If you would like information regarding the POP presentations at the upcoming workshops, please contact your DCSS POP coordinator at 1-866-249-0773.

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See the POP Newsletter Online  
at  
[www.childsup.ca.gov](http://www.childsup.ca.gov)



## Sharon Jourden

is POP coordinator for the state's most northwesterly county, Del Norte. She moved there in 1990 and after owning an espresso shop for a year, left the "grind" and went to work for child support. She worked her way to supervisor and now oversees six departments within their office, including case intake, welfare and, of course, POP.

"Education is key in Del Norte," so Sharon has been active in outreach and setting up training for POP in the community. She also has established a very good working relationship with the medical records/POP person, Annie Martindale, at their only hospital, Sutter Coast.

On the personal side, Sharon and her husband have three children and three grandchildren. She stays busy by raising money for various charities and nourishing "the lazy artist" in her. She even designed their agency logo that was put onto shirts and jackets for all staff to wear.

Sharon works hard, but is quick to give kudos to those she works with, "I am lucky to have a great team working with me," she states "all work hard at making sure paternity is established."

POP thanks you Sharon and your hard working team!!!



The Paternity Opportunity Program (POP) reached a historic milestone in 2004 when the one millionth declaration of paternity was filed in California. For the record, POP number one million came from two Spanish-speaking parents who had a baby girl at San Joaquin General Hospital in French Camp. A little more than 10 years ago, the first POP form filed in California came from two parents of a baby boy who signed a form at General Hospital in Eureka in the fall of 1993 during the POP pilot phase.

The program began in 1993 with a pilot program in six California hospitals located in Los Angeles, Humboldt and Nevada counties. The success of the pilot led to state law in January 1995 that required all licensed birthing hospitals in California to provide POP. The number of POP declarations received in 1995 and 1996 was a rather modest 20,000 per year.

In 1997, the program made incredible strides as state law required a POP before an unmarried father's name be placed on the birth certificate. It also made a paternity declaration equal to a court judgment of paternity. Those changes caused a tremendous surge in the number of POP forms filed. Since 1997, more than 100,000 forms have been filed every year in the program.

The foundation of the success of POP has been the hard work and dedication of hospital birth recorders throughout California who have submitted more than 90% of the forms filed. On behalf of the children and parents who have benefited from this program, we send a million thank yous for a million POPs.

## BELIEVE IT OR POP

**POP helped a member of the US Navy stationed in Iraq** to get medical coverage for his child back home. The sailor used the askpop e-mail address to contact the POP unit from Iraq. He needed to have paternity established in order to get dependent coverage for his son who was born in California but was now living in Tennessee.

He was told that he and the mother could complete a POP form by having a notary witness her signature in Tennessee, sending the form to him in Iraq so his signature could be notarized there, then filing the form back in California. It was a matter of days and paternity was established.

The members of our armed forces serving throughout the world are very important to the POP unit. Establishing paternity is vital to them in getting dependent benefits for their children. **Military members with orders can sign a POP form early to ensure that paternity is established at the earliest possible point in the child's life.**

For more information, contact your POP analyst at (866) 249-0773 or by e-mail at [askpop@dcss.ca.gov](mailto:askpop@dcss.ca.gov).

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# Father Unknown

Hidden within each POP form filed in California is a story. This is one of those stories. It is told in the words of an adult child who contacted ASKPOP.



*“My parents never married, never thought of marrying. It was 1971 when I was born under the open sky on a starry night in Maui, Hawaii. My father was a New Yorker, my mother a San Francisco flower girl. Their relationship was heading south; nonetheless, my birth brought flowers to my mother and some temporary conciliation. But my father never showed up to put his name on my birth certificate.*

*My mother moved away with me. He came and stayed with us for a few months, changed diapers, did good, fatherly things but the relationship was over. Nothing could change that. One day he said good bye. More than 20 years would go by before we would see each other again.*

*In the meantime the school years came with healthcare, college, passports, and mountains of paperwork. “Father unknown,” mother and I would write over and over again. It never felt right or easy.*

*As a teenager I looked for my father. I sent letters to old friends of my parents hoping to find him. Finally, someone had run into him in San Francisco.*

*We met again, but the relationship between my father and I was not easy. The time lost was irrecoverable. There were many differences in the way we saw the world and the way we lived. We saw each other intermittently. Some times we had fun together, others we fought bitterly. Months of separation ensued but eventually we sought each other again.*

*I am now a 33-year old wife and mother to be. My father will be a grandfather in May. His eyes became watery when he learned the news. Will my child have a “grandfather unknown?” We have come to realize that there are things too important to be postponed forever. There is a job that has been waiting more than 33 years.*

*With the help of the Paternity Opportunity Program, my father and mother will soon file a declaration of paternity. After that I will request that my birth certificate be amended. We may not be able to change the past but we sure have so much to look forward to in the future.”*

[Askpop@dcss.ca.gov](mailto:Askpop@dcss.ca.gov)

**FOCUS  
ON  
HOSPITALS**

**Barton Memorial Hospital** in South Lake Tahoe, California has the distinction of being located in one of the most popular resort areas in the world. Tourists come to Lake Tahoe from all over the world to enjoy the recreation in this beautiful Sierra destination. Barton hospital is unique in that it has a clinic at the Heavenly Valley Ski Resort.

Sharla Burt and Pam Zak are the birth recorders at Barton Hospital, and they recognize the importance of POP to the parents who come to their hospital to deliver their babies. In January 2005, Sharla wanted to ensure she had the very latest POP information, so she traveled almost 500 miles round trip to attend a POP workshop in Santa Clara County. Sandra Lee and Angelical Pedrozo, the county hostesses of the meeting, were quite surprised when Sharla was identified as the person who had come the farthest distance for the training. Sharla said that the trip over the Sierra Mountains was well worth it in order to gain the information she needed to serve the POP parents of Barton Hospital. Thanks for “going the distance” Sharla and Pam!



# BELIEVE IT OR POP (CONTINUED)



**LANGUAGE OF LOVE...**A hospital in San Mateo County came across a unique situation. An English speaking mom had just given birth and Spanish speaking dad was ready to sign the POP form. "Do the parents sign the English or Spanish CS909?" was the question asked to the State POP Team. The hospital staff was instructed to inform each parent of their rights and responsibilities in their own native language. Then, after being certain each parent understood what

they were signing, they could pick either form and sign. The important thing was that each parent understood their rights and responsibilities and that they completed one form.

**Patty O'Neill Porges**, a long time POP coordinator, formerly of the Tahoe office of El Dorado County Child Support and currently with Plumas County Child Support, really loves the program. She jokes that her dedication is so great that when she married a few years ago she became "**Mrs. POP**" by virtue of her new initials.

**POP HELPS STOP FRAUD...**A new mom who tried to trick the welfare office in Humboldt County was stopped by attentive hospital and county POP coordinators. A welfare case was sent to the local child support agency to establish support. In researching the case, it was found that the woman had used different names in the hospital and at the welfare office. The matter was referred to local authorities for a fraud investigation.

## AM I DOING IT RIGHT???

Throughout the day we may do a hundred or more mindless tasks that we've done for weeks, months or even years. But are we doing them correctly? Here in POP we thought it might be helpful to go over some of the more simple tasks of the POP coordinator, just to be sure *we're doing it right*.

Did I give both parents their rights and responsibilities in oral AND written format?

Did I make sure ALL the boxes on the POP form were filled out correctly?

Did I actually SEE the parents sign the form?

Did I remember to sign the POP form myself?

Did I include my agency code on the mailing address when I submitted the form?

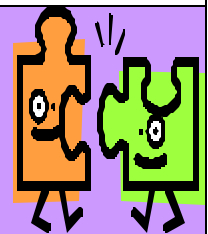
If you answered YES to all of these questions, then YOU ARE DOING IT RIGHT!!!!

If you answered NO to one or more of these questions then we have a few suggestions for you:

- Dig out your POP manual and review
- Dust off the old training video and take 12 minutes to watch
- Call your local POP coordinator to set up training.

If you have no idea what your POP manual, training video or Agency Code is or who your local POP coordinator is, contact your State POP Team!

## POP PUZZLE



Can you figure out what everyday words have some "POP" in them?

S C L O P P E I \_\_\_\_\_

T R O P T A P \_\_\_\_\_

C P N R O P O \_\_\_\_\_

V R O O P P E \_\_\_\_\_

O T P I S E P O T O \_\_\_\_\_

Answers: POPstic, POPtair, POPcorn, POPover, tooisiePOP



### Your State POP Team

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