

21 Questions on Paternity ***Frequently Asked Questions***

Introduction to Question & Answer Document

The Acknowledgment of Paternity (AOP) form is a critical component to unwed, expectant parents, and their child's legal rights. It ensures that each individual's rights are upheld while legally connecting the child to both parents, which is important to healthy child development. This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document is designed to demystify any questions you may have on the AOP process and to serve as a support guide to your very important work.

Common AOP Form Questions

- 1. When can an AOP be signed?** *Up through and including when the child is 21 years of age.*
- 2. What information is necessary in order for the AOP form to be properly registered?** *The form must be completed and signed by both parents, witnessed by person(s) not related to the parents and filed with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.*
- 3. Can a minor sign an AOP?** *Yes, a minor can sign an AOP form.*
- 4. How should I process AOPs that are from same-sex couples?** *AOP forms are only applicable for male and female couples when the woman is not married.*
- 5. Many expectant families are often seeing the form for the first time when they arrive to the birthing unit. When is the best time to have the conversation with them on the AOP form?** *The best time to have the conversation on the AOP form is during the parents' pre-natal stage and preparation for birth. It is very difficult to have a full conversation on the AOP form immediately following birth and during discharge. It is best to review this during the pre-natal preparation.*
- 6. How important is the child's name on the AOP form?** *The child's name is very important, as the AOP cannot be processed without including it. Moreover, the child's name must match the name on the birth record.*
- 7. Do grandparents have any say in the completion of the AOP form?** *Grandparents do not have a say in the completion of the AOP form.*
- 8. Who can serve as a witness to the AOP being signed?** *Anyone who is **NOT** related to the parents biologically can serve as a witness to the AOP form being signed.*
- 9. What do I do if a witness is not present and a form needs to be signed?** *Anyone can serve as a witness as long as the person(s) are not related to the parents.*

- 10. Can I still have the AOP conversation if it isn't in a room where there's privacy and full confidentiality?** *You may, but this will be based on your individual birthing facility's protocol and policy.*
- 11. What can be used as "formal" identification for fathers signing the AOP form?** *Identification is not required for either parent to complete and sign an AOP form.*
- 12. Will a father's immigration status prevent him from signing the AOP form?** *No, a father's immigration status should not prevent him from signing the AOP form. Also, immigration status is not asked during any potential Child Support hearings.*
- 13. How can we best assist parents who have literacy challenges in completing the AOP form?** *It is up to your individual facility to make accommodations for patients with literacy and/or language barriers. Forms are available in other languages for reference at https://newyorkchildsupport.com/dcse/aop_forms.html.*
- 14. What should I do if the father is incarcerated and/or living in another state or country?** *The completed AOP form may be mailed to the **Corrections Unit** after the birth is registered. Please see page 4 of the AOP form for the appropriate mailing address.*
- 15. How can we best prevent errors associated with parents that have multiple middle and last names, which is common among Latino families?** *The Electronic Vital Events Registration System (**EVERS**) can generate an AOP form in a PDF format. The AOP PDF will pre-fill with most of the case information entered in EVERS for the birth case. This pre-filled form can assist you in ensuring that the information was captured accurately when reviewing with the parents.*
- 16. In the AOP form, it asks whether the parent(s) is on public assistance. What is considered as public assistance?** *Cash assistance (formerly Welfare), not including SNAP (formerly food stamps) or Medicaid.*
- 17. How should I direct parents who are unwilling to sign the AOP form after I've had the conversation with them?** *Please inform the parent(s) that the form is voluntary and may be submitted up until, and including, the child's **21st birthday**.*
- 18. I'm often very busy preparing expectant parents for birth and then discharge, and may not have the time to have a full conversation on the AOP form. Are there any resources available that can assist with this if my birthing facility does not have an on-site social worker?** *NYC's 311 call center and the NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene's Vital Records website page, www.nyc.gov/vitalrecords, provides additional information on the AOP form. You may also contact the NYC Child Support Program (OCSE) at **929-221-4653**.*

- 19. My birthing facility receives a lot of birth referrals through private doctors or local clinics. What role should private doctors or clinics play?** *Ideally, individual facilities will have connections to local pre-natal health clinics and private doctors who are referring patients, but it is the individual facility's administrative decision to determine what role there is for private doctors and pre-natal health clinic staff.*
- 20. Where can I get more copies of the AOP form once I've run out?** *You may order AOP forms online from NY State Office of Temporary Disability and Insurance (OTDA) at https://www.childsupport.ny.gov/dcse/aop_howto.html, or the NYC Child Support Program (OCSE) by calling **929-221-4653**.*
- 21. How can the NYC Child Support Program assist me with my AOP needs?** *OCSE provides a host of support services that may benefit your facility, staff, colleagues and patients. OCSE provides **free workshops** for birthing facility staff, their patients and network of community-based organizations on the AOP form, importance of establishing paternity at birth, and the overall child support program. Also, OCSE provides Low Cost DNA Testing, copies of the AOP form; free pamphlets, videos and other educational materials on establishing paternity and child support, and a full-time technical support line that you may call if you have questions on the AOP form.*

You may contact the following if you still have questions on the AOP form:

- *If you have questions about the **EVERS System and/or properly submitting** your completed AOP form, you may call the NYC Dept of Health & Mental Hygiene's Birth Registration office at **(212) 788-4550**, and also access more information at www.nyc.gov/vitalrecords.*
- *If you would like to order more **copies of the AOP form** or to schedule a child support workshop you can contact the NYC Child Support Program (OCSE) at **929-221-4653**. For more information on OCSE's overall program, you may also visit their website at www.nyc.gov/hra/ocse.*
- *If you would like to arrange a **Low-Cost DNA Test** on your patient's behalf, you may call **929-221-5008**. Patients can also call and arrange a test themselves.*
- *For more information on Office of Temporary Disability and Insurance's (OTDA) program, to order more AOP forms, or stream their video on the AOP process, you may visit their website at <https://www.childsupport.ny.gov/dcse/home.html>.*