



Health Policy, Office of Vital Records
Minnesota Fathers' Adoption Registry
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St. Paul, MN 55164-0882
651-201-5994
www.health.state.mn.us

Minnesota Fathers' Adoption Registry (MFAR)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is MFAR?

MFAR is a database of men who think they may be fathers of children. It was created in 1998 to provide a way for putative fathers to register and be notified if their child is put up for adoption in Minnesota. MFAR stabilizes the adoption process by placing time limits on a putative father's opportunity to assert his rights. Registering with MFAR does not establish a man as a child's legal father.

What is a putative father?

A putative father is a man of any age who thinks may be a child's father. He is not married to the child's mother when the child is born. He has not established paternity with a court order and he has not filed a Recognition of Parentage form with the Minnesota Department of Health.

How does MFAR work?

If a child is placed for adoption in Minnesota, the law requires that the registry be searched for Minnesota born children. If a putative father is identified in a search, and he has met the filing requirements, the agency supervising the adoption, the mother, or the county involved in the adoption must notify him. The court must have proof of the MFAR search before it will finalize the adoption.

When should a man register?

A father not married to the mother of his child may sign up with MFAR before the child is born or within 30 days of the child's birth. Registration after 30 days may not protect his rights.

How does a man register?

The putative father must complete and sign the MFAR registration form and return it to: Fathers' Adoption Registry, Minnesota Department of Health, Office of Vital Records, P.O. Box 64499, St. Paul, Minnesota 55164-0499.

Is registration required?

No. Registration is voluntary.

Will registering with MFAR put a father's name on the child's birth record?

No. Only a legal father's name is on his child's birth record.

What if a man does not register or registers more than 30 days after the birth?

If he doesn't register, the putative father risks not being notified of any adoption court action. The child may be adopted without his consent and the court may rule that he has given up any rights he has as a father in the adoption process. He may be considered to have abandoned the child.

If he registers late, the search information will be shared with the court. However, the court will determine if the registration is valid.

What must a man do after registering?

It is the putative father's responsibility to update his personal information on the registry. If he does not keep his address current with MFAR, he risks not being notified.

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Does registration affect the mother?

A man provides the mother's address, if he knows it, when he registers. The mother is notified of the registration. If he did not provide the mother's address or the address is invalid, the mother will not receive notice of the registration.

Who can search MFAR?

Agencies supervising the adoptive placement of a child, the birth mother, attorneys representing the birth mother or prospective adoptive parents, or the county agency involved may search the registry. They may search 31 days or more after the birth of the child. Child support agencies may also request a search.

What happens with a search?

Before the court will finalize an adoption for a child born in Minnesota, a search of MFAR must be done. Proof of the search must be presented to the court. If the search shows that a putative father registered, proof that the man was notified must also be presented to the court.

What happens when a putative father is notified by the court?

The father may choose to pursue his rights as a father, he may choose to deny that he is the father and consent to the adoption, or he may do nothing. If the father chooses to pursue his rights as a father, he will need to go to court. He will need to file a paternity action to establish that he is the child's legal father.

How does a man establish paternity?

A putative father can establish paternity by signing a voluntary Recognition of Parentage form with the mother and filing it with the Minnesota Department of Health. Once filed, the father's name will be entered on his child's birth certificate and he will have a legal relationship with his child. Custody or parenting time is not established with the Recognition of Parentage. Or a man can start a paternity case in the local District Court where the child lives. If the court finds him the father, the court will issue an order adjudicating him. Genetic testing may be required by the court.

What if a man cannot afford an attorney?

If a putative father cannot afford an attorney, he may seek free legal counsel by contacting the county court administrator's office where the adoption petition is filed. He may qualify for legal counsel appointed at public expense.

Why is a father's name not on the birth record?

If a mother is unmarried at the time of the child's birth, the birth record is recorded only with the Mother's name. Paternity must be established to list the father on the record.

If parents signed the Recognition of Parentage form or if the court adjudicated a father and his name is not on his child's birth record, the form or the order may not have been filed with the Minnesota Department of Health Office of Vital Records.

Will a man have to pay child support if he registers with MFAR?

Registering on MFAR does not obligate a man to pay child support. However, the child support agency may search MFAR and use information from MFAR to locate an alleged father, establish paternity, and establish an order for support. A putative father may want to contact his local county child support office. If he applies, the child support office can help him establish paternity.



For more information, contact:
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