

Paternity Matters

For you... AND your child!

Paternity Matters:
A division of
The Office of
Recovery
Services/
Child Support
Services

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WELCOME!

Welcome to this historic occasion of the first edition of the Paternity Matters Newsletter! Be sure to save your copy because it is bound to be a collector's item someday.

As we discussed what we wanted to do in our new Paternity Matters group, we knew that we wanted to have a way to teach you about paternity establishment issues, answer your questions, get to know all of you, and allow you to get to know us. A newsletter seemed like a great way to accomplish all of those goals.

There's only one problem with a newsletter: no one in the Paternity Matters group has ever put together a newsletter before. So, you'll see that these first few editions will be a learning experience for us.

As we develop this newsletter, we'll need your feedback. Tell us

how we can help you. What would you like to learn about? What columns should be regular features? What questions do you have about the Voluntary Declaration of Paternity? Paternity establishment? Parents' rights? The Office of Recovery Services? Genetic tests?

You ask the questions, and we'll search for the answers. We'll have access to a whole group of experts who can help: policy analysts for the Office of Recovery Services, attorneys from the Attorney General's Office, and birth record specialists at the Office of Vital Records and Statistics.

Our audience, at least at the beginning, will be all of the wonderful hospital birth record specialists and midwives who attend home

deliveries, but as Paternity Matters grows, so will our audience as we add various State Government offices and community groups who work with unwed mothers and fathers.

Together, we can all make a difference in the lives of so many of Utah's children by establishing a legal paternity relationship.



How will these little boots help with Voluntary Declarations of Paternity?

Look inside...



Facts and Figures

- In 2005, **9,002** children were born out-of-wedlock in Utah.
- In 2005, **3,792** Voluntary Declaration of Paternity forms were signed at the hospital.

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Getting to Know Us!

Introducing: Emilee Beers

My name is Emilee Beers, and I am your contact/outreach person with the Office of Recovery Services.

Since we'll be working together, here's a little information about me. I grew up in Utah County and currently live in Layton. I am divorced with two children who are the joy of my life. I work a lot! Besides my job with ORS, I am a Realtor for a new home builder, so I get to help people design the custom homes of their dreams! I enjoy golf, reading, playing with my kids, movies.... I could go on forever. I'm addicted to Pepsi, and I love a good doughnut!

I have worked for state government for almost 14 years, all with the Office of Recovery Services. I have worked in many different capacities at ORS, from mail clerk to collection agent to Agency Trainer.

One of my favorite jobs was as a "Presiding Officer." This position allowed me to work with paternity establishment. I have established many child support and paternity orders over the years, and I have also had the opportunity to with parents signing the Voluntary Declaration of Paternity.

Establishing paternity was very rewarding to me. I knew that by having parents sign paternity documents, a child would be entitled to a much better life!

One thing that always pushed me to get paternity established was the knowledge that the child would be eligible for the father's health insurance and Social Security benefits. To me, this meant that the child could benefit from more frequent health care opportunities.

Of course, once paternity was established, a child support order could be set to financially benefit the child for years to come.

parents and presenting them with the opportunity to establish paternity at the hospital. You really are providing an invaluable service to Utah's children.

I have enjoyed my visits with many of the hospitals in the recent months and getting to know so many of you. I am so impressed with everyone I have met, and I appreciate all that you do. I feel like we are forming great relationships and hope we will continue to work closely for years to come. My hope is that you will feel comfortable in contacting me directly with questions, concerns, comments, ideas, etc.

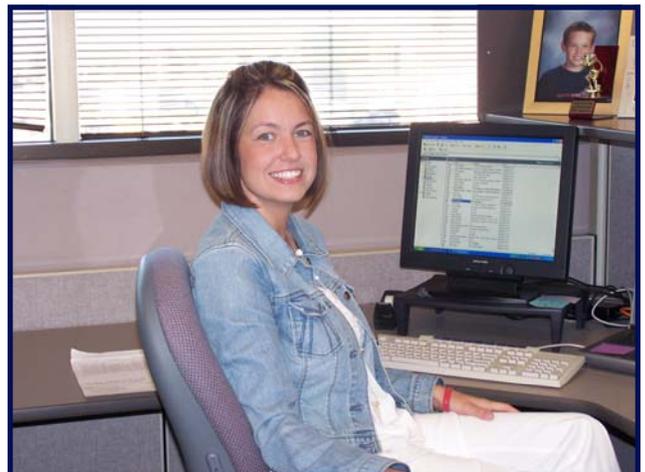
Utah's hospital birth certificate specialists and midwives are a hard working group, and many of you go the extra mile to get these paternity established. I want you to know that what you do does not go unnoticed. You aren't just "doing a job," you are changing lives for the better everyday!

*"You aren't just
'doing a job,'
you are
changing lives
for the better
everyday!"*

All of these benefits were things I took very seriously, and I still do. I always knew that my small contribution would affect children for years to come.

I know that many of you are in the same position. You have the ability to improve a child's quality of life immensely by educating unwed

KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!



NEW and IMPROVED: VDP Pamphlets Are On the Way!

Paternity Matters is very excited to announce the release of the new Voluntary Declaration of Paternity pamphlets and written legal notice. We're hoping that you and the parents you work with will be pleased with the new format with its bright new colors, fun photos, and a much more user-friendly design,

You will receive three different documents:

- Voluntary Declaration of Paternity: Steps You Can Take for Your Child's Sake (English)
- Voluntary Declaration of Paternity: Steps You Can Take for Your Child's Sake (Spanish)
- Voluntary Declaration of Paternity: What You Should Know (English on one side, Spanish on the other)



Once you receive a supply of all three documents, you may destroy any remaining copies of the old Voluntary Declaration of Paternity pamphlets and start using the new documents.

As each document gets back from the printers, we'll send a supply to the hospitals and to the Office of Vital Records and Statistics. All supplies should be sent out by the second week of March. You may receive multiple shipments to get all of the supplies to your hospital, so watch for them in the mail.

If you have any questions once you receive your forms, please feel free to contact us at Paternity Matters!

Let us know what you think of the new design!



We'd love to work with you to develop different types of matching advertisements that could be displayed in your hospitals (possibly posters, table-side displays, etc.)

If you're interested, contact Liesa at 801-536-8986 or at lcorbri2@utah.gov



<p>STEP ONE: LEARN WHY PATERNITY ESTABLISHMENT IS IMPORTANT?</p>  <p>PATERNITY MEANS FATHERHOOD</p> <p>When an unmarried mother gives birth, the biological father of the child does not automatically have any of the legal rights or duties that go along with fatherhood.</p> <p>"Paternity establishment" gives unmarried parents all of the same rights and duties that married parents have when a child is born.</p> <p>PATERNITY ESTABLISHMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> allows financial SUPPORT from both parents. permits the child to be added to the father's, as well as the mother's, MEDICAL insurance. may help doctors to research FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY. permits the father to pursue RIGHTS that go along with fatherhood, including custody, parent-time (visitation) and decision-making. gives the child a claim to BENEFITS from the father, such as inheritance, Social Security, veteran's benefits, etc. may give the child important CITIZENSHIP rights, if the father was not born in the United States. <p><i>"It was important to me that my son know who his father is and that [his] name is on the birth certificate. The paternity form did that. It was easy, quick and didn't cost us anything." —From The Power of 2</i></p>	<p>STEP TWO: LEARN ABOUT THE VOLUNTARY DECLARATION OF PATERNITY (VDP)</p>  <p>The Voluntary Declaration of Paternity (VDP) is an easy form that unmarried parents can sign to state that a man is the biological father of the child and that he should be recognized by law as the father. Signing the VDP is completely voluntary.</p> <p>The Voluntary Declaration of Paternity is the fastest, easiest and least expensive way to establish paternity in Utah.</p> <p>Before you sign a VDP, the form will be explained to you in at least two ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> You'll watch a short video or listen to a recorded phone message, and You'll read a short paper called "The Voluntary Declaration of Paternity: What You Should Know." <p>The VDP is a legal document, so take this time to learn about the form you're signing, the legal rights and duties the VDP gives you and your child.</p> <p>If either parent has any doubts that this man is the father of the child, you can have genetic tests to know for certain before you sign. You can get genetic tests through private companies at your own expense or through the Office of Recovery Services.</p>	<p>Genetic tests are FREE when establishing paternity and child support at the Office of Recovery Services.</p> <p>Applications are available at the Office of Recovery Services' phone numbers or website listed on the back of this brochure.</p>  <p>STEP THREE: FIND A VDP FORM</p> <p>The VDP is given to unmarried parents with the birth certificate forms when a child is born. If the form is signed and filed with the birth certificate, the father's name will be on the original birth certificate.</p> <p>After the child's birth, the VDP is also available at the Office of Vital Records and Statistics and at all local health departments. If the form is filed later, the Office of Vital Records and Statistics will amend the birth certificate to add the father's name.</p> <p>STEP FOUR: SIGN THE VDP FORM</p>  <p>The mother and the biological father sign the VDP in front of two witnesses.</p> <p>If the father or mother is under age 18, his or her parent or guardian must also sign the VDP.</p> <p>If the mother is married to another man at any time during the 300 days before the child is born or when the child is born, her (ex-) husband must also sign the document to agree that he is not the biological father.</p>
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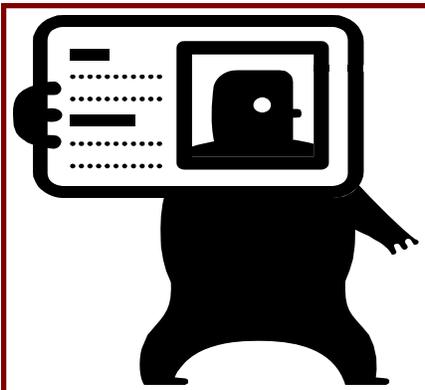
Who Are They REALLY?

Changes to Identification Requirements on the VDP

As many of you have heard, you are no longer **required** to complete the identification field on the Voluntary Declaration of Paternity if the signing parents do not have identification available. The feedback Emilee has heard about this change as she has visited the hospitals has been mixed: some of the birth certificate specialists are very happy about this change and feel that this will help them obtain more paternity establishments; others are concerned because they view parent identification as very important and as a protection to themselves.

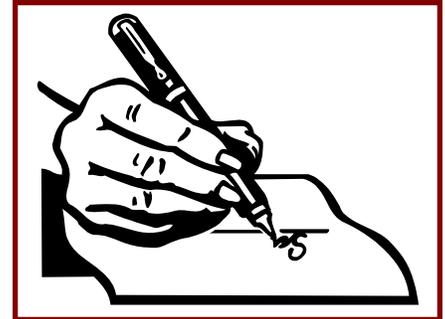
Why make this change?

The numbers of Voluntary Declarations of Paternity completed at the hospitals have been declining over the past few years. The Office of Recovery Services spoke to the Office of Vital Records and Statistics about what could possibly be causing this trend. Marie Aschliman has been very helpful in helping us examine these issues. Her number one recommendation was that we remove the identification requirement. This was surprising to us by itself, but



even more surprising was when she explained to us that it was the mothers who often did not have their identification available at the hospital since they are told to leave their identification and valuables home when they come to the hospital to have their babies.

This problem had never occurred to anyone at the Office of Recovery Services, but Marie was certain that the numbers of VDPs completed at the hospitals would skyrocket if that identification piece could



Paternity was REALLY the biological father. But we cannot make the requirements for this process so strict that we affect parents' abilities to take this very important step while they are at the hospital. So, we have to settle for a reasonable standard: We educate parents about the importance of the form and its legal consequences, and allow the parents who sign the form to accept those consequences.

I don't know these people? How can I sign as a witness unless I see I.D.?

As a witness, you don't have to know the parents. When you witness, you are only confirming that the mother and father presented themselves to you as the parents listed on the document, that they appear to be signing voluntarily (i.e., you can't actually see anyone twisting their arms), and that you watched two individuals actually sign the form (i.e., the mother didn't forge the father's signature).

What if someone signs the VDP fraudulently?

Removing the identification requirement from the VDP form should remove one of the biggest obstacles that prevents willing parents from establishing paternity at the hospital.

be removed, so we put our attorneys to the task of redesigning the Voluntary Declaration of Paternity so that the identification would not be required but the form would remain legal.

Why wouldn't you want identification?

To be honest, we probably would like identification. We would also like anything that could help us make sure that every father who signed the Voluntary Declaration of

Getting to Know Us!

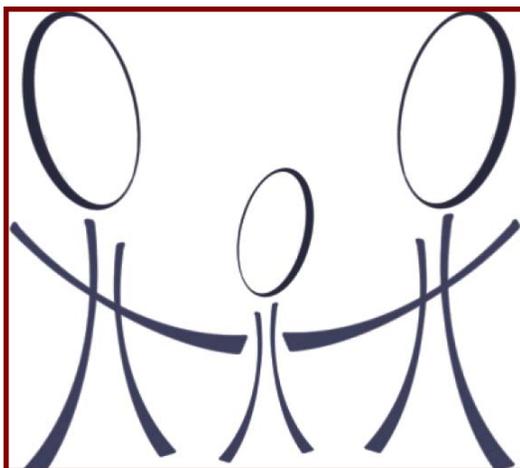
Introducing: Liesa Corbridge

Since I won't get to visit hospitals with Emilee very often, this little article may be the only chance you have to get to know this strange person who keeps sending you all of those e-mails. I want you to feel comfortable in contacting me, so here's just a little background.

I have lived in the Ogden area most of my life and have now settled in West Haven. It's a nice, quiet place to live, but I'll never get used to seeing people walk their goats on leashes instead of their dogs! I'm married with a daughter and a son. The latest addition to our family is the world's worst-behaved (but most-loved) Labrador retriever.

I've worked for the Office of Recovery Services (ORS) since 1994. Ironically, the very first training session I attended was an introduction to the brand new "Voluntary Declaration of

Paternity." Paternity establishment fast became my favorite kind of work here at ORS, so as paternity establishment has moved to different areas in our office, I've followed along behind it. For the past three years, I've been a policy writer for ORS, and luckily for me, most of my writing assignments have involved paternity establishment.



Last summer, ORS received a federal grant to improve Utah's paternity establishment

numbers and to develop new ways to share paternity information with the Office of Vital Records and Statistics. This grant proposal was where the concept of Paternity Matters was born! Those employees who developed the grant proposal have moved on to bigger and better jobs, so I've been given the very exciting opportunity to step in and coordinate the grant projects, including Paternity Matters.

Thank you for everything you do to establish paternity! I'm looking forward to working with all of you more in the future. It is my hope that Paternity Matters will become a useful resource for the hospitals and other community groups. Please tell us what you need in order to be comfortable with paternity establishment and successful in guiding parents through this process, and we'll do everything we possibly can to develop the tools that will help you.

Who Are They REALLY? (continued from page 4)

This is always a concern; however, identification alone can't prevent someone from committing fraud when they sign the VDP. There are procedures through the courts for the parents to challenge Voluntary Declarations of Paternity that are signed fraudulently. If all else fails, the courts can require the parties to get genetic tests to help resolve the problems caused by the fraudulent form. Surprisingly,

fraudulent situations due to one person signing the VDP for someone else (basically, forgery) have been very rare.

When will we get the new VDP forms?

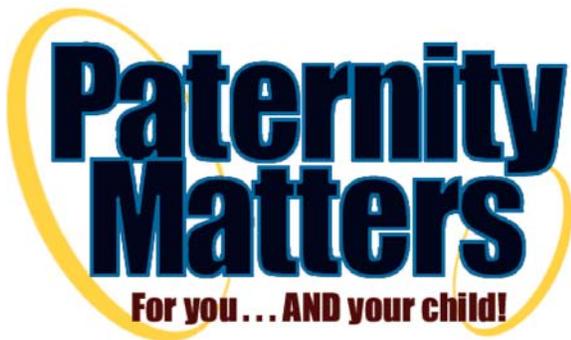
The new Voluntary Declaration of Paternity form design is with the Office of Vital Records and Statistics (OVRs) to complete. By law, OVRs creates and maintains this form, so they will

work with you to install the new forms on your computer systems and talk to you about the changes on the form.

Until OVRs is ready to make these changes, just remember that if the parents are willing to sign the VDP, don't let missing identification stand in the way of letting them take this very important step for their child!

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"Paternity Matters" was formed by the Office of Recovery Services in 2005 to provide education about the paternity establishment process in Utah. Paternity Matters focuses on three main objectives:

- *Provide training, supplies and support to individuals who work with unwed parents on the Voluntary Declaration of Paternity process in the hospitals.*
- *Educate unwed parents about paternity establishment, methods of establishment, and benefits to the parents and children.*
- *Provide training and educational materials to community groups who work with unwed parents.*

Paternity establishment is important to our communities, to unwed parents, and most of all, to the children!



The Numbers Are In:

2005 Golden Pen Awards



At the Office of Vital Records Regional Conferences held in September and October 2005, you were introduced to the Paternity Matters version of the Academy Awards all rolled into one: The Golden Pen Awards.

The Golden Pen Awards will be given by Paternity Matters to recognize outstanding improvements in the rates for establishing paternitys at the hospital. We've heard some tremendously inspiring stories about the extra lengths that many of you go to in order to establish paternity for Utah's children, and we'll be looking for ways to recognize all that you do.

The regional conferences aren't held until fall of each year. Quite honestly, the suspense is

killing us! So, we've decided that we'll announce the results for the 2005 Calendar Year Paternity Matters Awards in those categories based solely on numbers, and we're sure that we'll also come up with some special categories and

awards throughout the year.

With that, please picture all of the elegance and pomp surrounding the award shows (and imagine us in FABULOUS dresses) and let's begin!

For Outstanding Performance in Paternity Establishment for Calendar Year 2005, the Golden Pen Awards go to:

Less than 100 Out-of-Wedlock Births

Highest Increase by Number: Lakeview Hospital (25 more!)
Highest Increase by Percentage: Gunnison Valley Hospital (41.48%!)
Highest Overall Percentage: Blanding Birth and Medical Center (90%!)

100 to 499 Out-of-Wedlock Births

Highest Increase by Number: Logan Regional Hospital (44 more!)
Highest Increase by Percentage: Castleview Hospital (26.49%!)
Highest Overall Percentage: Uintah Basin Medical Center (68.38%!)

500 or more Out-of-Wedlock Births

Highest increase by Number: Ogden Regional Medical Center (48 more!)
Highest Increase by Percentage: Ogden Regional Medical Center (6.95%!)
Highest Overall Percentage: LDS Hospital (61.41%!)

Congratulations!