



Frequently Asked Questions About the Acknowledgment of Parentage Form

The [Acknowledgment of Parentage \(AOP\) form](http://childsupport.ny.gov/parentage/resources) (available at childsupport.ny.gov/parentage/resources) is an essential document for protecting the legal rights of parents and children. It ensures that each individual's rights are upheld while legally connecting the child to both parents, which is important for healthy child development. This frequently asked questions document is intended to make the AOP process clearer and support the valuable work of hospital staff.

Common AOP Form Questions

1. When can an AOP form be signed?

The AOP form can be signed at any time to administratively establish parentage. (This differs from establishing parentage through Family Court. Parentage may only be brought to Family Court when the child is older than age 21 and if the parent acknowledged the child in writing or paid support prior to the child turning 21.)

2. What information is necessary for the AOP form to be properly registered?

The form must be completed and signed by both parents and witnessed by two people not related to the parents. The form can be signed by each parent at different times.

3. Can a minor sign an AOP form?

Yes, a minor can sign an AOP form. See Page 4 of the AOP form for more information.

4. How should I process AOPs from same-sex couples?

Pursuant to state law, an AOP can be signed by an unmarried birth parent and the biological other parent of a child conceived naturally **or** by a married or unmarried birth parent and the intended other parent of a child conceived through assisted reproductive technology, regardless of sex or gender. If the birth parent is married, the intended other parent must be their spouse. All AOP forms should be processed the same way.

5. Many expectant families see the AOP form for the first time when they arrive at the birthing unit. When is the best time to talk to them about the AOP form?

The best time to have the conversation about the AOP form is during the prenatal stage and preparation for birth. It is difficult to have a full conversation about the AOP form immediately after birth or during discharge.

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 it. The child's name must match the name on the birth record.

7. Can grandparents make decisions about the completion of the AOP form?

No, grandparents cannot make decisions about the completion of the AOP form.

8. Who can witness the signing of the AOP form?

Anyone who is **not** related to the parents, biologically or otherwise, can serve as a witness to the signing of the AOP form.

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 they are not related to the parents. If there are not two people present who are not related to either parent, the form should not be signed.

10. Can I have the AOP conversation if there is no private space to speak confidentially?

Follow the protocol and policy for handling oral communications with patients at your birthing facility.

11. What can be used as identification for parents signing the AOP form?

Identification is not required for either parent to complete and sign the AOP form.

12. Will the other parent's immigration status prevent them from signing the AOP form?

No, the other parent's immigration status should not prevent them from signing the AOP form. Also, immigration status is not asked about during any potential child support hearings.

13. How can we best help parents who have literacy challenges complete the AOP form?

The AOP process requires that parents receive written and oral notice of their legal rights. The AOP video, available at childsupport.ny.gov/parentage/resources in English or with Spanish subtitles, meets the oral notification requirement. The form must be completed in English, but reference copies are available on the same website in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, and Yiddish.

14. What should I do if the other parent is incarcerated or living in another state or country?

If the other parent is not available to sign the AOP form, the birth parent may complete the Child and Birth Parent sections and mail the form to the other parent to complete. Once the Child, Birth Parent, and Other Parent sections are completed and witnessed, the form may be mailed to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Vital Records, Attention: Corrections Unit Room 144, 125 Worth St., CN-4, New York, NY 10013-4089.

15. How can we best prevent errors associated with parents who have multiple middle and last names?

The Electronic Vital Events Registration System (eVital) (nyc.gov/health/evital) can generate an AOP form in a PDF format. The PDF will prefill with most of the case information entered in eVital, including the middle and last names. This prefilled form can help ensure that the information was captured accurately when reviewing with your patient. AOP forms are routinely reviewed and rejected if there are issues.

16. How should I direct parents who are unwilling to sign the AOP form after I've had the conversation with them?

Please inform the parents that the form is voluntary. Parents may decide whether to sign the AOP form or file a petition with Family Court to establish parentage.

17. I'm often busy preparing expectant parents for birth and discharge and may not have time for a full conversation about 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?

Parents must be given written and oral notice of their legal rights. If that cannot happen, then the parents should not sign the form and should be directed to 311 or the NYC Health Department's Vital Records webpage at nyc.gov/vitalrecords for more information. Viewing the Acknowledgment of Parentage in New York video, available at childsupport.ny.gov/parentage/resources in English or with Spanish subtitles, can fulfill the oral notice requirement. Additional resources can be found at the same webpage. You may also contact the NYC Child Support Program at dcse.cseweb@dfa.state.ny.us.

18. Where can I get more copies of the AOP form?

Facilities may order AOP forms by downloading and submitting the OTDA-876 Request for Documents or Publications at childsupport.ny.gov/pdfs/OTDA-876.pdf or by emailing the NYC Child Support Program at dcse.cseweb@dfa.state.ny.us. Parents can find the AOP form in English at otda.ny.gov/programs/applications/5171.pdf.

19. How can the NYC Child Support Program help with my needs related to the AOP form?

Many support services for staff and patients are available from the NYC Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) at nyc.gov/hra/ocss. The OCSS provides free workshops where birthing facility staff, their patients, and community-based organizations can learn about the AOP form, the importance of establishing parentage at birth, and other child support services. The OCSS also provides low-cost DNA testing and copies of the AOP form, as well as pamphlets, videos, and other educational materials on establishing parentage and child support.

Additional Resources

- If you have questions about the eVital System or properly submitting a completed AOP form, call the NYC Health Department's Birth Registration office at 646-632-6563. For more information, visit nyc.gov/vitalrecords.
- If you would like to arrange a low-cost DNA test on your patient's behalf, call 929-221-5008. Patients can also call and arrange a test themselves.
- Visit New York State's Child Support Services at childsupport.ny.gov to learn more about the statewide Child Support Program, completing the AOP form, or ordering more AOP forms.
- If you need to request a certified copy of an existing completed AOP form, call **311** or visit nyc.gov/vitalrecords for the application form.

AOP Videos

To learn more about acknowledging parentage, watch these two short videos:



Acknowledgment of Parentage in New York (youtu.be/HPnllLe3z4A) explains when parentage needs to be established, what signing the form means, and who should or should not sign the form.



Completing the Acknowledgment of Parentage Form (youtu.be/SpHxbhZbHJQ) explains how to complete the form.