

Minnesota Fathers' Adoption Registry (MFAR)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is MFAR?

The Minnesota Fathers' Adoption Registry (MFAR) is a database of men (putative fathers) who think they may have fathered children with women to whom they are not married. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) maintains MFAR.

What is a putative father?

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

How does MFAR work?

Before an adoption becomes final in Minnesota, including an adoption that involves a second parent with the birth mother, the law requires a search of MFAR to find out if a putative father has registered. If he has registered, a notice goes to his address on file in MFAR. The father can then decide if he wants to take part in decisions about his child, become the legal father, or do nothing.

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 after the child's birth. Registration after 30 days may not protect his rights.

How does a man register?

A putative father may register online or fill out a paper registration form and mail or fax it to MDH. Find both forms at [MFAR Registration \(www.health.state.mn.us/people/vitalrecords/registry/register.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/vitalrecords/registry/register.html).

Does a man have to register?

No. Registration is voluntary.

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

No. The birth record of a child lists only the names of the legal parents.

What happens if a man does not register?

If a putative father does not register:

- He may not learn if his child is in the adoption process
- The adoption may occur without his approval
- The court may rule that he
 - Has given up any rights he has as a father in the adoption process
 - Abandoned the child

If a putative father registers 30 or more days after the child's birth, the court will decide if the registration is valid.

What must a man do after he registers?

1. He must look at the Registration Confirmation form MFAR sends him. If anything on the form is wrong, he may fill in the correct data and return the form to MFAR.
2. A man must let MFAR know if his address changes so he can receive notice if the child is in the adoption process. He may use the registration confirmation form to let MFAR his new address OR he can fill out and mail or fax the [MFAR Change of Address \(PDF\) \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/vitalrecords/registry/docs/mfarcoa.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/vitalrecords/registry/docs/mfarcoa.pdf) form.

Does registration affect the mother?

When a man registers with MFAR, he supplies the mother's address, if he knows it. If the man gives the mother's address, MFAR lets the mother know about the registration. If the father does not give the mother's address, or if the address is not valid, the mother does not learn about the registration.

Who can request an MFAR search?

- Agencies supervising the adoptive placement of a child
- Birth mothers
- An attorney for the birth mother or prospective adoptive parents
- The county agency involved
- Child support agencies

Only searches made 31 days or more after the birth of the child are valid in court.

What happens with a search?

Before an adoption becomes final in Minnesota, the law requires a search of MFAR. The court must have proof of the MFAR search and, proof of notice to the putative father.

What does a putative father do when he receives a notice?

The putative father may choose to:

- Pursue his rights as a father
- Deny that he is the father and agree to the adoption
- Do nothing

If the father chooses to pursue his rights as a father, he must go to court and ask the court to make him the child's legal father.

How does a man become a legal father?

He may

- Fill out a Voluntary Recognition of Parentage (ROP) form with the mother
- Go to the District Court in the county where the child lives to get a paternity court order
- Write or call the child support office in the county where the child lives for help

For more information, see [Birth Records and Paternity \(www.health.state.mn.us/people/vitalrecords/rop.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/vitalrecords/rop.html).

If a man cannot afford an attorney

If a man who has registered with MFAR cannot pay for an attorney, he may contact the court administrator's office in the county where the child lives. He may qualify for legal counsel appointed at public expense.

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

Registering on MFAR does not force a man to pay child support. However, child support agencies may search for putative fathers in MFAR, help them become legal fathers, and set up orders for child support.

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To obtain this information in a different format, call 651-201-5970.