

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 has not established paternity with a court order and he has not filed a Recognition of Parentage form with the Minnesota Department of Health. He is not a legal father.

How does MFAR work?

Before an adoption becomes final in Minnesota, the law requires a search of MFAR to determine 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 participate in decisions regarding his child, establish paternity, 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?

The putative father must fill out, sign, and return the MFAR Registration Form to the Minnesota Department of Health. See the registration form for the address.

Is registration required?

No. Registration is voluntary.

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

No, his name will not go on the birth certificate. A birth record only lists the name of the legal father.

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 determine if the registration is valid.

What must a man do after registering?

A man who has registered must keep his mailing address in MFAR up-to-date; the court requires a notice be sent to the address on file if the child is in the adoption process.

Does registration affect the mother?

When a man registers with MFAR, he provides the mother's address, if he knows it. If the man gives the mother's address, we let 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 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. Child support agencies may also request a search. 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 to determine if a putative father is registered. The court must have proof of the MFAR search and proof of notice to the putative father at the address on file with MFAR before it will finalize the adoption.

What does a putative father do when notified by the court?

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 file a paternity action to establish that he is the child's legal father.

How does a man establish paternity?

He may fill out a Voluntary Recognition of Parentage (ROP) form with the mother; start a paternity action in the local District Court where the child lives, or contact the county child support office in the county where the child lives to apply and get help establishing parentage.

For information about adding a father to a birth record with a Recognition of Parentage (ROP) or with a court order, 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.

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

The birth record of a child lists only the names of the legal parents.

MDH has not received a signed and notarized ROP form or a paternity court order.

Will I have to pay child support if I register with MFAR?

Registering on MFAR does not force a man to pay child support. However, child support agencies may search MFAR to locate a putative father, establish paternity, and establish an order for support.

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