



Dear Community Service Provider,

In the state of Louisiana, approximately 54% of children are born to unmarried mothers and without a legally established father, which means a large percentage of families in our state will face enormous obstacles. Studies indicate that unmarried parents will most likely acknowledge paternity formally if they are educated about the process and benefits. Establishing paternity is a simple process by which both parents sign an Acknowledgement of Paternity (AOP) Affidavit recognizing the biological father as the legal father. This process can be done free of charge at the hospital after the baby is born or later, for a small fee, at any local registrar or child support agency.

I would like to introduce the **Louisiana Paternity Establishment Program (LAPEP)**. LAPEP is a program of the Department of Children and Family Services dedicated to providing paternity establishment outreach, education, training, guidance, assessment, and technical assistance to birthing hospitals, local registrars, child support enforcement offices, community partners and unmarried parents. The program's focus is to promote voluntary paternity establishment to ensure that children in Louisiana have legally recognized fathers and the financial and emotional support that all children need and deserve.

LAPEP strives to ensure that unmarried parents have the information necessary to make a positive choice for their child. To achieve this goal, we strive to create partnerships with agencies that provide any type of services to unmarried parents. **You can help us achieve this important initiative by displaying our free educational literature in your office.**

Together we can provide parents with the necessary information to understand and make an informed decision about establishing paternity. If you have questions or would like to additional materials, please contact LAPEP either by phone at **866-430-9569** or by email at **lapaternity@maximus.com**. You can also visit our website at **www.la-paternity.com** for more information.

Thank you for joining our mission to give Louisiana's children the best possible chances at a promising future. "Together as a team we can achieve more!"

Sincerely,

LAPEP Team

Why BOTH parents make a difference...

Establishing paternity helps children...

- Form a relationship with both parents
- Develop a sense of identity
- Know about both families' medical histories
- Get access to health insurance and benefits like Social Security and inheritances
- Stay away from high-risk behaviors

Establishing paternity helps mothers...

- Get help with responsibilities and decisions
- Share the joys of being a parent
- Divide the costs of bringing up the child

Establishing paternity helps fathers...

- Get legal rights to have a relationship with their child
- Create an emotional bond with their child and be a part of their life
- Share their side of the family with their child
- Ask the court to assist with visitation and custody matters

Learn more:



www.la-paternity.com