

April 27, 2021

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

The purpose of this letter is to provide County Welfare Departments (CWDs) a reminder of the benefits and training opportunities available regarding the Parentage Opportunity Program (POP).



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

April 27, 2021

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

FROM: JENNIFER HERNANDEZ, DEPUTY DIRECTOR
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT DIVISION

SUBJECT: PARENTAGE OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM (POP) CLIENT
BENEFITS AND STAFF TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The purpose of this letter is to provide a reminder to County Welfare Departments (CWDs) of the benefits and training opportunities available regarding the Parentage Opportunity Program (POP).

Background:

The POP is administered by the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) and processes declarations of paternity in accordance with California Family Code section 7571. A declaration signed by both the biological father and the unmarried mother filed with DCSS establishes a legal parent-child relationship between the father and the child. The POP is a voluntary program for eligible parents to establish legal parentage free of charge. It enables parents to avoid the often lengthy and expensive court processes otherwise required to establish legal parentage. A filed Voluntary Declaration of Parentage (VDOP) has the same force and effect as a judgement for parentage issued by a court.

Eligible parents can establish legal parentage by completing a VDOP and having their signatures witnessed by an authorized witnessing agency. California Family Code §7571(f) provides a list of authorized witnessing agencies, which include:

- Birthing Hospitals – At the time of birth
- Local Child Support Agency Offices
- Offices of Local Registrar of Births and Deaths – Vital Records
- Courts – Family Law Facilitator
- County Welfare Departments – Health and Human Services Agency

Staff in these offices shall witness the signatures of parents wishing to sign a voluntary declaration of parentage and shall be responsible for forwarding the signed declaration to the Department of Child Support Services within 20 days of the date the declaration was signed.

The Benefits of Establishing Parentage by Acknowledgment:

The VDOP is a form for a birth parent and other parent to voluntarily sign to legally establish parentage. It has the same force and effect as a judgment for parentage issued by a court. Establishing parentage may give your child the right to:

- Social security benefits
- Military benefits
- Inheritance rights
- Health insurance
- Survivor's benefits

For more information on a Voluntary Declaration of Parentage, visit: <https://childsupport.ca.gov/establishing-legal-parentage/>

Trainings and Questions:

The POP performs training for witnessing agencies annually and upon request. Additionally, questions regarding the program may be directed to DCSS Parentage Opportunity Program (POP) at (916) 464-1982 or by email at askpop@dcss.ca.gov.

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the CalWORKs & Family Resilience Branch at (916) 675-3419.