

A Parent's Guide to Hospital Birth Registration in Massachusetts

Your baby's birth certificate is one of the most important legal documents that will ever be created for your child. This document will be used throughout their life to prove identity, citizenship, age, and parentage. This legal document provides the facts of birth and makes a birth a permanent record in the State of Massachusetts'.

Chapter 46 of the Massachusetts General Law establishes specific time periods for the reporting of birth certificate information from the hospital. Birth certificates must be reported to the city or town clerk within 10 days of the birth. We recognize that in a limited number of cases may require the record to be held for a longer period of time while awaiting certain legal documents. Please reach out to your hospital's birth registrar for guidance if you have any questions or concerns.

After your baby is born, you will receive a worksheet to help create the legal birth certificate. It is very important that you answer every question as completely and accurately as possible.

Not all questions on the birth certificate worksheet will appear on the legal birth certificate. Statistical questions such as race, education, ethnicity, etc. help the Department of Public Health follow the trends of delivering parents and babies. These items are required to be collected according to Massachusetts' law (M.G.L. Ch.111 §24B) This information is kept completely confidential and is used for medical research, public health and population statistics, and program planning. Statistical information is kept strictly confidential and is sent directly to the Department of Public Health (DPH), separate from the legal record that is sent to the City Clerk.

Why Marital Status is Important

The delivering parent's marital status impacts the legal status of the record and the need for additional legal paperwork that may be needed to register the document. For more information please visit <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/learn-about-establishing-parentage>

- If a delivering parent is married, or was married at any time between date of conception and date of birth, the spouse **must** be listed as the second parent **unless** appropriate affidavits and acknowledgment of parentage documents are completed. (In the state of Massachusetts, time period between the date of conception and the date of birth is legally defined as 300 days prior to birth).

The biological second parent may only be added by completing the "Acknowledgment of Parentage" statement **after** a "Affidavit of Non-Parentage" statement is completed by the delivering parent and the spouse or ex-spouse.

- If a delivering parent is unmarried and wishes to include the biological second parent's information on the child's birth record, the "Acknowledgment of Parentage" statement must be completed.

- If a delivering parent is unmarried and wants to add a non-genetic second parent and they are not married to each other, the couple can add the second parent *only* if the couple conceived the child through assisted reproductive technology (ART). The couple must complete the “Acknowledgment of Parentage” statement.
- Failure of the delivering parent to provide accurate marital status information can cause the child’s birth certificate to remain unregistered or to be voided, causing legal difficulties for the child in the future.

Both the “Affidavit of Non-Parentage” and the “Acknowledgement of Parentage” forms can be signed while at the hospital with the birth registrar. If you anticipate you will need to sign any either of these forms for your child’s birth certificate. Please be sure to bring a valid state or federal issued form of identification with you to the hospital. These are legal documents that can only be notarized with valid supporting forms of photo identification.

Applying for a Social Security Card

During the birth certificate process, you will have the option of electronically applying for a social security card for your child. If you choose to electronically apply, you will receive the social security card in the mail in roughly 4-6 weeks. To ensure delivery, parents who have an apt/unit value in their mailing address should put their child’s name on the mailbox. The social security card is mailed to the child, not to the parents.

Obtaining a Copy of the Birth Certificate

A certified copy of the birth certificate will be available at Newburyport city hall 10 days after birth. Instructions and ordering information can be found on their website.

<https://www.cityofnewburyport.com/city-clerk>

Birth Certificate questions may be directed to the Anna Jaques birth registrar (978) 463-1357 or by emailing mcotter@ajh.org