



State of South Carolina

Department of Social Services

Child Welfare Policies and Procedures:

Subject:	Responsible Father Registry
Authority:	S.C. Code Section 63-9-810 and 63-9-820
Standards:	South Carolina Practice Model: Guiding Principles and Standards
Application:	Child Welfare Services Staff, Attorneys, and Child Placing Agencies
Purpose:	
The South Carolina Department of Social Services maintains a Responsible Father Registry, which contains names and pertinent information of men who report to be the unmarried biological father of a child. An unmarried biological father who files a timely claim of paternity with the Responsible Father Registry preserves his right to receive notice of termination of parental rights and adoption proceedings. The department, private child placing agencies, and private attorneys who are involved in termination of parental rights and adoption proceedings may request access to search the Responsible Father Registry online or may request in writing that the State Adoptions Office completes the search on their behalf. Information contained in the Responsible Father Registry is confidential and is not subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Searches conducted on behalf of non-employees require payment of a fee. The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidance regarding the Responsible Father Registry and If adoption is the child's permanent plan, use of the Responsible Father Registry to identify and engage unmarried biological fathers during service delivery promotes placement in stable, permanent adoptive homes and reduces disruption of adoptive placements.	
Policy Statement:	
Case Managers must access the Responsible Father Registry to determine whether a claim of paternity exists as to any child who is the subject of a termination of parental rights proceeding or adoption proceeding. Case Managers must check the Responsible Father Registry, within specified timeframes, prior to seeking termination of parental rights to the child and prior to adoption finalization.	
Definitions:	
Registrant: an unmarried biological father or a male who claims to be the unmarried biological father of a child. Unmarried biological father: A male who is not married to the biological mother of a child of whom he is or claims to be the natural father. Child: any person under eighteen years of age	
Procedures:	

Original Effective Date:

Current Effective Date: 9/23/2021

A. Registration with the Responsible Father Registry	1. Claims may be filed with the Responsible Father Registry by a male who is not married to the biological mother of a child whom he is or claims to be the natural father. a. Claims can be made online by the registrant or DSS Form 1549: Responsible Father Registry Registration can be mailed to State Office Adoptions. 2. To be approved to claim of paternity: b. DSS Form 1549: Responsible Father Registry Registration must be filed only by the registrant father. No other person may file the claim on behalf of the registrant father. c. May be filed before or after the birth of the child. d. Must be filed before the date of a petition for termination of parental rights or petition for adoption is filed or it will be null and void. e. Must include: i. The registrant's name, address and date of birth; ii. The name of the mother of the child and if known the mother's address and date of birth; iii. If known, the child's name, place of birth and date of birth; iv. If known, the date, county, and state of conception of the child; v. The date the claim is filed. f. Must be signed by the registrant father. 3. If State Office Adoptions registers the father, SCDSS will issue a Certificate to the Registrant Father verifying claim of paternity. 4. If the registrant fails to notify SCDSS of a change of name and/or address, DSS Form 1548: Responsible Father Registry Notice of Change, he is deemed to have waived his right to notice. 5. Once registered, the claim will remain on the registry for nineteen years after the initial filing date.
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B. Revocation	1. A registrant may at any time revoke a claim of paternity and shall file the revocation and completed DSS Form 30248: Revocation of Claim of Paternity with SCDSS Responsible Father Registry. 2. The filing of such a revocation of claim of paternity with SCDSS Responsible Father Registry makes the prior claim of paternity filed by the registrant null and void. 3. SCDSS will issue a Certificate to the Registrant Father verifying revocation.
C. Request for Name and/or Address of Father with Claim of Paternity	1. A written request to SCDSS by an agency or attorney may be made and include the following: a. Mother's name, and (if known) address, and date of birth; b. If known, child's date of birth and place of birth c. If known, date, country and state of conception 2. A fee of \$50.00 will be charged for a search of the Registry. 3. If no claim is found, SCDSS issues a Certificate of Diligent Search stating the search was conducted and no claim of paternity regarding that registrant or child was found. a. The Certificate of Diligent Search must be filed with the family court within ten days of receipt. 4. If a claim is found, the registrant must be served with notice of adoption or termination of parental rights action within ten days of the requester's receipt of the name and address of the registrant.

D. DSS Staff and Attorneys	1. To receive authorization to search, staff must complete a registration process through the Responsible Father Registry Administrative System Menu. Pending users will initiate their request for access to the Registry through https://ssl.sc.gov/DSSFatherRegistry/Search/RequestSelectUserType.aspx 2. After the on-line registration is complete, notification of approval for search access will be sent by email and will include the user's PIN so the user may create a login. After a user has created an account, they will gain access to the search function. If a user is denied access, an email will also be sent to indicate the reason for denial.
Forms:	DSS Form 1549: Responsible Father Registry Registration DSS Form 1548: Responsible Father Registry Notice of Change DSS Form 30248: Revocation of Claim of Paternity
Resources:	N/A
Related Management Reports:	N/A

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