

What You Need to Know About Your Baby's Birth Certificate

Legal Document - In preparing for the birth of your child, there is some information you need to know about your child's birth certificate. The birth certificate is a legal document that will follow your child throughout his or her life. It contains legal information about the birth of your child as well as other items concerning the mother and father of the child. The birth certificate also contains a section for obtaining information for medical and health use only. The health information is used for statistical purposes to help improve the health of pregnant women and children in Alabama. This confidential information will not be included on the certified copy of the birth certificate.

Naming Your Child - Naming your child is an important decision for both you and your child. You may give your child any name you wish. Traditionally, children born to married parents have the same last name as their father. However, a child can have the mother's surname, a hyphenated name made up of the mother's surname and father's surname or any other name that the parents wish. Be sure the child's name is entered on the birth certificate exactly as you want it. Since the birth certificate is a legal document, a court action may be required to change the child's name.

Listing of Father when Mother is Unmarried - If you are an unmarried mother, the father of your child can be listed on the birth certificate if he acknowledges paternity of the child. By acknowledging paternity, both you and the father are attesting to the fact that he is the biological father of the child. To establish paternity, the Acknowledgement of Paternity Form must be completed and signed by both of you in the presence of a notary. If an Acknowledgement of Paternity has been completed, the father's name can be added to the birth certificate. The Acknowledgement of Paternity can be completed at the time of birth (while at the hospital). Ask hospital staff for the appropriate form. To complete this form after leaving the hospital, you should contact the Department of Human Resources county office or the Center for Health Statistics at P.O. Box 5625, Montgomery, AL 36103-5625 for further information.

Social Security Card Information - When you are interviewed for information for your child's birth certificate, you will be asked if you want to obtain a Social Security Card for your child. By stating on the birth certificate that you want a social security number issued for your child, the Social Security Administration will issue a Social Security Card for your child within a few weeks. It will be sent to the mailing address you provide on the birth certificate. The Social Security Card will be helpful for filing your taxes, obtaining a passport for your child, admitting your child to day care programs, and registering your child for school and other programs or services.

Correction of Errors - Please be sure to review your child's birth certificate for accuracy before signing it. Never sign a blank birth certificate. Once the record has been filed, any corrections, such as misspellings or omissions, must be made through the Center for Health Statistics, P.O. Box 5625, Montgomery, AL 36103-5625.

How to Obtain a Certified Copy of Your Child's Birth Certificate - You will not automatically receive a certificate of birth for your child. The hospital may give you a hospital record of the birth. However, the hospital document is not an official copy of the birth certificate and cannot be used for legal purposes. The hospital will offer you the opportunity to order an official certified copy of your child's birth certificate from the State before you leave the hospital. You may also obtain a certified copy at any county health department in Alabama once the birth certificate has been filed with the State or you may obtain a certified copy of the birth certificate by writing to the Center for Health Statistics, at P.O. Box 5625, Montgomery, Alabama, 36103-5625. The fee for a certified copy of a birth certificate is \$15.00 for one certified copy and \$6.00 for each additional copy ordered at the same time. You must include information such as the name of the child, date of birth, county of birth, the mother's full maiden name and the father's full name, if listed on the record. In the event you need a certified copy of your child's birth certificate immediately, such as for passport purposes, the hospital can expedite the filing of the birth certificate with the Center for Health Statistics for an additional fee.

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