

# R U READY 2 B A PARENT?



## THINK ABOUT IT!

*Facts about the legal and financial responsibilities of parenthood.  
Think about it before you become a Mom or a Dad.*

## MONEY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Having a child means a financial commitment that lasts a lifetime. As your child grows up, he or she deserves to be loved and financially supported by both parents.

## LOVE AND COMMITMENT

You know being a kid isn't easy. It is even harder growing up without a father or mother involved in your life and actively supporting you. Both parents need to provide love and support to their kids. Whether they are doing homework, learning to ride a bike, or dealing with everyday issues, your kids will need your support! Are you prepared to be a loving parent and be there whenever your child needs you?

## RIGHTS

Kids have a right to information about their family. They need to know family medical history, be able to access social security and insurance coverage, and they have a right to inheritances from both parents.



California  
Department of  
Child Support  
Services

# SUPPORTING A BABY TAKES WORK

## THINK ABOUT IT!



### **My baby's father and I aren't married, but we love each other. Do I really need to worry about child support now?**

Yes, because sometimes situations change. To protect your baby's future, you should establish paternity (fatherhood). Signing a Declaration of Paternity is a fast, free and easy way to make sure your baby's father is legally recognized. Both unmarried parents can sign the declaration at the hospital when the baby is born. Or, they can do it later at the county Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) or the county welfare department. Also, the DCSS can give you information on getting a court order for child support if you are not together.

### **What do I need to do when my baby's mom wants child support from me?**

After a child support case is opened with the county Department of Child Support Services (DCSS), you'll receive legal papers called a "Summons and Complaint" and proposed "Judgment Regarding Parental Obligations". You must respond. You can talk about the case with the county DCSS, either by calling or going to the department's office. Their telephone number and address is on the legal papers.



### **I don't get along with the baby's mom. What will happen if I refuse to pay child support?**

The laws are tough on people who do not pay their support. Your driver's license privilege may be denied or suspended. Your credit history may be damaged, which means you can't buy the things you want like a stereo or a car. If you want to be a teacher or contractor someday, you may not be able to get a professional license because of unpaid child support. If you're lucky enough to win the lottery, your luck won't last long. Your lottery winnings will go to pay child support that is owed.

### **What if I know who the father of my baby is but he won't admit it?**

If he denies being the father, your county Department of Child Support Services will use a swab test to help determine paternity (fatherhood). The swab test is a quick and painless procedure that involves rubbing a cotton-like swab against the inside of a person's cheek to gather DNA samples from the possible father, the mother and the baby. The tests are very accurate. If you are not married to the father, his name will not be placed on the birth certificate until paternity is established.



# BOTH PARENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE

## THINK ABOUT IT!



### **Can I get child support services while I'm pregnant — before my baby is born?**

No. You can, however, apply for services **after** the child is born. If the man you believe is the father denies it, DNA tests can be ordered after your baby is born. DNA tests can be scheduled by your county Department of Child Support Services.

### **My baby's daddy left town after I had our child and I don't know where he lives now. How will the state find him?**

Any information you can give to your county Department of Child Support Services will be helpful. Driver's license records, social security numbers and work records are used to find parents who should be paying support. Information about the parent can also be gathered from employment and income tax records and law enforcement files. If the parent has moved to another state, the Child Support Enforcement Office in that state will work to locate the parent.



### **How long does it usually take to get an order for the other parent to pay child support?**

If the county Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) knows where to find the other parent, the DCSS can usually get an order for child support within 90 days. However, if the county DCSS must establish paternity, or if your case has to go to court, then the county DCSS has 12 months to complete all the necessary steps and get a child support order.

### **I can't pay child support because I'm in school and I don't have a job.**

Just because you're in school doesn't mean your financial obligation to your child goes away. While child support is usually based on your income, a court could determine that you have the ability to work, at least part time, while you are attending school.

It is important that you keep your county Department of Child Support Services office informed of your current situation.



# SUPPORT YOUR CHILD



## **Is it true that money to pay child support can be taken right out of my paycheck?**

Yes. If you're already under a court order, the county Department of Child Support Services will collect what you owe for each month plus payments on back child support if you're behind. Up to 50% of your take-home pay can be withheld. If you're not under an order, you'll be called in to the department office to talk about your income. Then, a court order will be set up for you to begin paying.

## **I've heard that my baby's father won't have to pay support if he's in the service.**

That is not correct. Joining the military does not mean a parent can avoid the responsibility to support his or her child. The county Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) will contact the military branch to begin sending in child support payments according to the child support order.



# THINK ABOUT IT



*For more information, contact  
your county Department of  
Child Support Services*



California Department of  
Child Support Services