



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES

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Virginia Paternity Establishment Program Adds More Fathers Amid COVID-19 Hospital Restrictions

2019 Top Ranking Virginia Hospitals Recognized

Richmond, VA (August 28, 2020) – The Virginia Paternity Establishment Program (VPEP), a program which offers unmarried parents the opportunity to establish paternity for their newborn, has witnessed increases in paternity establishment rates despite COVID-19 visitor restrictions at several birthing hospitals. Under the current COVID-19 restrictions, most hospitals nationwide have limited the number of visitors for new mothers to only one visitor throughout the duration of their hospital stay. At some hospitals, this has made it more difficult to establish paternity. However, with access to VPEP’s new website and tools, hospital birth registrars and new parents in Virginia have all the necessary resources readily available to support paternity establishment.

VPEP recently launched a new website to better assist users in gathering information about establishing paternity within the Commonwealth. The website provides information from the perspective of parents and partners, and features videos outlining the paternity establishment process. Additional documents, including the Acknowledgment of Paternity form is also available for download from the website.

Using VPEP’s resources, hospitals that have had lower paternity rates in the past, such as Sentara Norfolk General Hospital, have seen more than a 10% point increase in their paternity establishment rates. “We are thrilled our establishment rates have increased,” said Anthony Wright, manager of registration for Sentara Norfolk General Hospital. “Our team has worked diligently to promote paternity establishment and ensure that every unmarried parent receives the education and support they need when making the decision to add the father to the birth certificate.”

“The benefits of establishing paternity are vast and vary from increasing a child’s self-esteem to establishing a child’s health history,” said Brionna Jones, VPEP project manager. “It is imperative that we continually advocate the idea that paternity establishment is about the child, not about the parents. A child who has an established a bond with his or her father has greater access to emotional support and social and economic opportunities. With August being National Child Support Awareness Month, it serves as the opportune time to elevate the Commonwealth’s efforts to improve outcomes for children.

In 2019, more than 32,000 births in Virginia were to unmarried parents. The Commonwealth’s 2019 paternity establishment rate average was 73.68%. Fauquier Hospital in Warrenton, Virginia reported the highest paternity establishment rate, at 84% in 2019. The top ten ranked hospitals for 2019, as reported by the Office of Vital Records, are as follows:

2019 Virginia Births by Facility Hospital Voluntary Paternity Establishment Rates

Ranking	Hospital Name	2019 Paternity Establishment Rate
1	Fauquier Health Hospital	84%
2	Ballad Health Norton Community	82.1%
3	Reston Hospital Center	81.4%
4	Inova Loudoun Hospital	80.7%
5	Johnston Willis Hospital	80.4%
6	Ballad Health Lonesome Pine	80.2%
7	Valley Health Winchester Medical Center	79.7%
8	Bon Secours St. Francis Medical Center	79.6%
9	Sentara Princess Anne Hospital	79.4%
10	Stafford Hospital	78.8%

The [Virginia Department of Social Services' Division of Child Support Enforcement](#) oversees VPEP under the management of the program's contractor, Veritas HHS. Along with helping fathers establish paternity for newborns at birth, VPEP also supports paternity establishment later should unmarried parents decide after their hospital discharge to add the father to the birth certificate.

For more information or to request marketing materials, visit the VPEP website at www.vapaternity.com or social media platforms by searching '**Vapaternity**' on Facebook and Instagram, and '**VA Paternity Establishment**' on Twitter. For a complete listing of Virginia's 57 birthing hospitals and their respective ranking, email vapep@veritas-hhs.com.

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