

RE: Certificates of Birth for Newborns

Per Iowa law, section 144.13A, new parents are sent a certified copy of their newborn's birth certificate by the state registrar of vital records. The certificate is mailed to the attention of the birth mother if she has not given up custody of the infant at the hospital. Effective with October 2009 registrations, newborn certificates are the longer, more detailed birth certificate. (Prior to that, new parents received a short-form birth card.) The certificate is a certified, legal document with security features as those issued by the local County Registrar (County Recorder) and the State Registrar.

Married parents may expect the newborn certified copy within about four weeks of the birth if the hospital has registered the birth within seven days as required by law. Newborn certificates for infants of unmarried mothers, however, may not be printed and mailed for up to 8-10 weeks in order to process Paternity Affidavits and re-establish the birth record with the biological father's information on it. The current vital records system is limited in that it can only separate the records by marital status; therefore, all single parent births are held up whether or not the parents have submitted a Paternity Affidavit. Hospitals may provide single parents a photocopy of their completed Paternity Affidavit; however, it is not absolute proof that the Affidavit was received, accepted, and processed by the state registrar as required by law. Many Affidavits are rejected due to inconsistent information or incorrect completion of the Affidavit. Biological fathers of single parent births are not entitled to the birth certificate until their information has been established on the birth record.

When the mother receives the newborn certificate, there is also a letter enclosed that instructs her what to do if any corrections are necessary or the father's name is not on the birth certificate even though a Paternity Affidavit was submitted. Due to the overwhelming volume of Paternity Affidavits being filed, some newborn birth certificates could be printed before the Affidavit was processed and the mother would then need to return her newborn's certificate for a replacement.

Many birth certificates return to the state registrar's office because the mother moved and left no forwarding address, the address was insufficient, or she was not known at that address. Birth certificates will forward. Social security cards will not, and the mother must go to her nearest Social Security Administration office to obtain a duplicate even if she filed a forwarding notice with her post office. Social security cards can generally be expected in the mail within 4-6 weeks if the mother indicated a "yes" intention on the birth worksheet.