

CHAPTER 252F

ADMINISTRATIVE ESTABLISHMENT OF PATERNITY

Referred to in §252A.3A, 252A.6, 252B.3, 252B.4, 252B.5, 252B.9, 252B.20, 252B.20A, 252B.26, 252C.1, 252D.1, 252D.16, 252D.16A, 252E.1, 252E.1A, 252H.2, 252H.21, 252I.2, 252J.1, 598.21C, 598.21G, 598.22, 598.22B, 598.23A, 600.11, 600B.41A, 602.8102(47)

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252F.1 Definitions.

As used in [this chapter](#) unless the context otherwise requires:

1. “*Child*” means a person who is less than age eighteen or a person who is age eighteen but less than age nineteen and is engaged full-time in completing high school graduation or equivalency requirements in a manner which is reasonably expected to result in completion of the requirements prior to the person reaching age nineteen.
2. “*Child support services*” means the same as child support services created in [section 252B.2](#).
3. “*Department*” means the department of health and human services.
4. “*Director*” means the director of health and human services.
5. “*Mother*” means a mother of the child for whom paternity is being established.
6. “*Party*” means a putative father or a mother, as named in an action.
7. “*Paternity is at issue*” means any of the following conditions:
 - a. A child was not born or conceived within marriage.
 - b. A child was born or conceived within marriage but a court has declared that the child is not the issue of the marriage.
8. “*Paternity test*” means and includes any form of blood, tissue, or genetic testing administered to determine the biological father of a child.
9. “*Putative father*” means a person alleged to be the biological father of a child.
[93 Acts, ch 79, §14; 94 Acts, ch 1171, §31; 2006 Acts, ch 1016, §12; 2007 Acts, ch 218, §168, 187; 2008 Acts, ch 1019, §18, 20; 2010 Acts, ch 1142, §2; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §904](#)

252F.2 Jurisdiction.

1. In any case in which child support services is providing services pursuant to [chapter 252B](#) and paternity is at issue, proceedings may be initiated by child support services pursuant to [this chapter](#) for the sole purpose of establishing paternity and any accrued or accruing child support or medical support obligations. Proceedings under [this chapter](#) are in addition to other means of establishing paternity or support. Issues in addition to establishment of paternity or support obligations shall not be addressed in proceedings initiated under [this chapter](#).

2. An action to establish paternity and support under [this chapter](#) may be brought within the time limitations set forth in [section 614.8](#).

[93 Acts, ch 79, §15; 2021 Acts, ch 76, §150; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §905](#)

252F.3 Notice of alleged paternity and support debt — conference — request for hearing.

1. Child support services may prepare a notice of alleged paternity and support debt to be served on a party if the mother of the child or a government official with knowledge of the circumstances of possible paternity relying on government records provides a written statement to the department certifying in accordance with [section 622.1](#) that the putative father is or may be the biological father of the child or children involved. The notice shall be accompanied by a copy of the statement and served on the putative father in accordance with [rule of civil procedure 1.305](#). Service upon the mother shall not constitute valid service upon the putative father. The notice shall include or be accompanied by all of the following:

a. The name of the recipient of services under [chapter 252B](#) and the name and birth date of the child or children involved.

b. A statement that the putative father has been named as the biological father of the child or children named.

c. A statement that if paternity is established, the amount of the putative father's monthly support obligation and the amount of the support debt accrued and accruing will be established in accordance with the guidelines established in [section 598.21B](#), and the criteria established pursuant to [section 252B.7A](#).

d. A statement that if paternity is established, a party has a duty to provide accrued and accruing medical support to the child or children in accordance with [chapter 252E](#).

e. A written explanation of the procedures for determining the child support obligation and a request for financial or income information as necessary for application of the child support guidelines established pursuant to [section 598.21B](#).

f. (1) The right of a party to request a conference with child support services to discuss paternity establishment and the amount of support that a party may be required to provide, within ten days of the date of service of the original notice or, if paternity is contested and paternity testing is conducted, within ten days of the date the paternity test results are issued or mailed to a party by child support services.

(2) A statement that if a conference is requested, a party shall have one of the following time frames, whichever is the latest, to send a written request for a court hearing on the issue of support to child support services:

(a) Ten days from the date set for the conference.

(b) Twenty days from the date of service of the original notice.

(c) If paternity was contested and paternity testing was conducted, and a party does not deny paternity after the testing or challenge the paternity test results, twenty days from the date paternity test results are issued or mailed by child support services to the party.

(3) A statement that after the holding of the conference, child support services shall issue a new notice of alleged paternity and finding of financial responsibility for child support or medical support, or both, to be provided in person to each party or sent to each party by regular mail addressed to the party's last known address or, if applicable, to the last known address of the party's attorney.

(4) A statement that if child support services issues a new notice of alleged paternity and finding of financial responsibility for child support or medical support, or both, a party shall have one of the following time frames, whichever is the latest, to send a written request for a court hearing on the issue of support to child support services:

(a) Ten days from the date of issuance of the new notice.

(b) Twenty days from the date of service of the original notice.

(c) If paternity was contested and paternity testing conducted, and a party does not deny paternity after the testing or challenge the paternity test results, twenty days from the date the paternity test results are issued or mailed to the party by child support services.

g. A statement that if a conference is not requested, and a party does not deny paternity or challenge the results of any paternity testing conducted but objects to the finding of financial responsibility or the amount of child support or medical support, or both, the party shall send a written request for a court hearing on the issue of support to child support services within twenty days of the date of service of the original notice, or, if paternity was contested and paternity testing conducted, and a party does not deny paternity after the testing or challenge the paternity test results, within twenty days from the date the paternity test results are issued or mailed to the party by child support services, whichever is later.

h. A statement that if a timely written request for a hearing on the issue of support is received by child support services, the party shall have the right to a hearing to be held in district court and that if no timely written request is received and paternity is not contested, the department shall enter an order establishing the putative father as the father of the child or children and establishing child support or medical support, or both, in accordance with the notice of alleged paternity and support debt.

i. A written explanation of the rights and responsibilities associated with the establishment of paternity.

j. A written explanation of a party's right to deny paternity, the procedures for denying paternity, and the consequences of the denial.

k. A statement that if a party contests paternity, the party shall have twenty days from the date of service of the original notice to submit a written denial of paternity to child support services.

l. A statement that if paternity is contested, child support services shall, at the request of the party contesting paternity or on its own initiative, enter an administrative order requiring the putative father, mother, and child or children involved, to submit to paternity testing.

m. A statement that if paternity tests are conducted, child support services shall provide a copy of the test results to each party in person or send a copy to each party by regular mail, addressed to the party's last known address, or, if applicable, to the last known address of the party's attorney.

n. A statement setting forth the time frames for contesting paternity after paternity tests are conducted.

o. Other information as child support services finds appropriate.

2. The time limitations established for the notice provisions under [subsection 1](#) are binding unless otherwise specified in [this chapter](#) or waived pursuant to [section 252F.8](#).

3. a. If notice is served on a party, child support services shall file a true copy of the notice and the original return of service with the appropriate clerk of the district court as follows:

(1) In the county in which the child or children reside if the action is for purposes of establishing paternity and future child or medical support, or both.

(2) In the county in which the child or children involved last received public assistance benefits in the state, if the action is for purposes of establishing paternity and child or medical support, or both, only for prior periods of time when the child or children received public assistance, and no ongoing child or medical support obligation is to be established by this action.

(3) If the action is the result of a request from another state or foreign country to establish paternity of a putative father located in Iowa, in the county in which the putative father resides.

b. All subsequent documents filed or court hearings held related to the action shall be in the district court in the county in which notice was filed pursuant to [this subsection](#). The clerk shall file and docket the action.

4. A party or child support services may request a court hearing regarding establishment of paternity or a determination of support, or both.

a. Upon receipt of a timely written response requesting a hearing or on its own initiative, child support services shall certify the matter for hearing in the district court in the county where the original notice of alleged paternity and support debt is filed, in accordance with [section 252F.5](#).

b. If paternity establishment was contested and paternity tests conducted, a court hearing on the issue of paternity shall be held no earlier than thirty days from the date paternity test results are issued to all parties by child support services, unless the parties mutually agree to waive the time frame pursuant to [section 252F.8](#).

c. Any objection to the results of paternity tests shall be filed no later than twenty days after the date paternity test results are issued or mailed to each party by child support services. Any objection to paternity test results filed by a party more than twenty days after the date paternity tests are issued or mailed to the party by child support services shall not be accepted or considered by the court.

5. If a timely written response and request for a court hearing is not received by child support services and a party does not deny paternity, the department shall enter an order in accordance with [section 252F.4](#).

6. a. If a party contests the establishment of paternity, the party shall submit, within twenty days of service of the notice on the party under [subsection 1](#), a written statement contesting paternity establishment to child support services. Upon receipt of a written challenge of paternity establishment, or upon initiation by child support services, the department shall enter ex parte administrative orders requiring the mother, child or children involved, and the putative father to submit to paternity testing, except that if the mother

and child or children previously submitted blood or genetic specimens in a prior action to establish paternity against a different putative father, the previously submitted specimens and prior results, if available, may be utilized for testing in this action. Either the mother or putative father may contest paternity under [this chapter](#).

b. The orders shall be filed with the clerk of the district court in the county where the notice was filed and have the same force and effect as a court order for paternity testing.

c. Child support services shall issue copies of the respective administrative orders for paternity testing to the mother and putative father in person, or by regular mail to the last known address of each, or if applicable, to the last known address of the attorney for each.

d. If a paternity test is ordered under [this section](#), the department shall direct that inherited characteristics be analyzed and interpreted, and shall appoint an expert qualified as an examiner of genetic markers to analyze and interpret the results. The test shall be of a type generally acknowledged as reliable by accreditation entities designated by the secretary of the United States department of health and human services and shall be performed by a laboratory approved by an accreditation entity.

e. The party contesting paternity shall be provided one opportunity to reschedule the paternity testing appointment if the testing is rescheduled prior to the date of the originally scheduled appointment.

f. An original copy of the test results shall be filed with the clerk of the district court in the county where the notice was filed. Child support services shall issue a copy of the filed test results to each party in person, or by regular mail to the last known address of each, or if applicable, to the last known address of the attorney for each. However, if the action is the result of a request from another state or foreign country, child support services shall issue a copy of the results to the initiating agency in that jurisdiction.

g. Verified documentation of the chain of custody of the blood or genetic specimens is competent evidence to establish the chain of custody. The testimony of the appointed expert is not required. A verified expert's report of test results which indicate a statistical probability of paternity is sufficient authenticity of the expert's conclusion.

h. A verified expert's report shall be admitted as evidence to establish administrative paternity, and, if a court hearing is scheduled to resolve the issue of paternity, shall be admitted as evidence and is admissible at trial.

i. If the verified expert concludes that the test results show that the putative father is not excluded and that the probability of the putative father's paternity is ninety-five percent or higher, there shall be a rebuttable presumption that the putative father is the biological father, and the evidence shall be sufficient as a basis for administrative establishment of paternity.

(1) In order to challenge the presumption of paternity, a party shall file a written notice of the challenge with the district court within twenty days from the date the paternity test results are issued or mailed to all parties by child support services. Any challenge to a presumption of paternity resulting from paternity tests, or to paternity test results filed after the lapse of the twenty-day time frame shall not be accepted or admissible by child support services or the court.

(2) A copy of the notice challenging the presumption of paternity shall be provided to any other party in person, or by mailing the notice to the last known address of each party, or if applicable, to the last known address of each party's attorney.

(3) The party challenging the presumption of paternity has the burden of proving that the putative father is not the father of the child.

(4) The presumption of paternity may be rebutted only by clear and convincing evidence.

j. If the verified expert concludes that the test results indicate that the putative father is not excluded and that the probability of the putative father's paternity is less than ninety-five percent, the department shall order a subsequent administrative paternity test or certify the case to the district court for resolution in accordance with the procedures and time frames specified in paragraph "i" and [section 252F.5](#).

k. If the results of the test or the verified expert's analysis are timely challenged as provided in [this subsection](#), the department, upon the request of a party and advance payment by the contestant or upon the initiative of child support services, shall order that an additional test be performed by the same laboratory or an independent laboratory. If the

party requesting additional testing does not advance payment, the department shall certify the case to the district court in accordance with paragraph “i” and [section 252F.5](#).

l. When a subsequent paternity test is conducted, the time frames in [this chapter](#) associated with paternity tests shall apply to the most recently completed test.

m. If the paternity test results exclude the putative father as a potential biological father of the child or children, and additional tests are not requested by either party or conducted on the initiative of child support services, or if additional tests exclude the putative father as a potential biological father, child support services shall withdraw its action against the putative father and shall file a notice of the withdrawal with the clerk of the district court, and shall provide a copy of the notice to each party in person, or by regular mail sent to each party’s last known address, or if applicable, the last known address of the party’s attorney.

n. Except as provided in paragraph “k”, child support services shall advance the costs of genetic testing. If paternity is established and paternity testing was conducted, child support services shall enter an order or, if the action proceeded to a court hearing, request that the court enter a judgment for the costs of the paternity tests consistent with applicable federal law. In a proceeding under [this chapter](#), a copy of a bill for genetic testing shall be admitted as evidence without requiring third-party foundation testimony and shall constitute prima facie evidence of the amount incurred for genetic testing.

93 Acts, ch 79, §16; 94 Acts, ch 1171, §32; 96 Acts, ch 1141, §5, 6; 97 Acts, ch 175, §77 – 84; 2005 Acts, ch 69, §17; 2007 Acts, ch 218, §169 – 175, 187; 2008 Acts, ch 1019, §18, 20; 2009 Acts, ch 41, §263; 2010 Acts, ch 1069, §29; 2012 Acts, ch 1061, §1; 2015 Acts, ch 110, §102, 103, 124; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §906

Referred to in [§234.39](#), [252F.4](#), [252F.5](#), [252F.6](#)

252F.4 Entry of order.

1. If each party fails to respond to the initial notice within twenty days after the date of service of the notice or fails to appear at a conference pursuant to [section 252F.3](#) on the scheduled date of the conference, and paternity has not been contested and each party fails to timely request a court hearing on the issue of support, the department shall enter an order against the parties, declaring the putative father to be the legal father of the child or children involved and assessing any accrued and accruing child support obligation pursuant to the guidelines established under [section 598.21B](#), and medical support pursuant to [chapter 252E](#).

2. If paternity is contested pursuant to [section 252F.3](#), [subsection 6](#), and the party contesting paternity fails to appear for a paternity test and fails to request a rescheduling pursuant to [section 252F.3](#), or fails to appear for both the initial and the rescheduled paternity tests and each party fails to timely request a court hearing on the issue of support, the department shall enter an order against the parties declaring the putative father to be the legal father of the child or children involved and assessing any accrued and accruing child support obligation pursuant to the guidelines established under [section 598.21B](#), and medical support pursuant to [chapter 252E](#).

3. If a conference pursuant to [section 252F.3](#) is held, and paternity is not contested, and each party fails to timely request a court hearing on the issue of support, the department shall enter an order against the parties after the second notice has been sent declaring the putative father to be the legal father of the child or children involved and assessing any accrued and accruing child support obligation pursuant to the guidelines established under [section 598.21B](#), and medical support pursuant to [chapter 252E](#).

4. If paternity was contested and paternity testing was performed and the putative father was not excluded, if the test results indicate that the probability of the putative father’s paternity is ninety-five percent or greater, if the test results are not timely challenged, and if each party fails to timely request a court hearing on the issue of support, the department shall enter an order against the parties declaring the putative father to be the legal father of the child or children involved and assessing any accrued and accruing child support obligation pursuant to the guidelines established under [section 598.21B](#), and medical support pursuant to [chapter 252E](#).

5. The department shall establish a support obligation under [this section](#) based upon the best information available to child support services and pursuant to [section 252B.7A](#).

6. The order shall contain all of the following:
 - a. A declaration of paternity.
 - b. The amount of monthly support to be paid, with direction as to the manner of payment.
 - c. The amount of accrued support.
 - d. The name of the custodial parent or caretaker.
 - e. The name and birth date of the child or children to whom the order applies.
 - f. A statement that property of a party ordered to provide support is subject to income withholding, liens, garnishment, tax offset, and other collection actions.
 - g. The medical support required pursuant to [chapter 598](#) and [chapter 252E](#).
 - h. A statement that a party who is ordered to provide support is required to inform child support services, on a continuing basis, of the name and address of the party's current employer, whether the party has access to health insurance coverage as required in the order, and if so, the health insurance policy information.
 - i. If paternity was contested by the putative father, the amount of any judgment assessed to the father for costs of paternity tests conducted pursuant to [this chapter](#).
 - j. Statements as required pursuant to [section 598.22B](#).
7. If paternity is not contested but a party does wish to challenge the issues of child or medical support, the department shall enter an order establishing paternity and reserving the issues of child or medical support for determination by the district court.

[93 Acts, ch 79, §17; 94 Acts, ch 1171, §33; 97 Acts, ch 175, §85; 2005 Acts, ch 69, §18; 2007 Acts, ch 218, §176, 187; 2008 Acts, ch 1019, §18, 20; 2010 Acts, ch 1142, §3; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §907](#)

Referred to in [§252F.3](#)

252F.5 Certification to district court.

1. Actions initiated under [this chapter](#) are not subject to contested case proceedings or further review pursuant to [chapter 17A](#).
2. An action under [this chapter](#) may be certified to the district court if a party timely contests paternity establishment or paternity test results, or if a party requests a court hearing on the issues of child or medical support, or both, or upon the initiation of child support services as provided in [this chapter](#). Review by the district court shall be an original hearing before the court.
3. In any action brought under [this chapter](#), the action shall not be certified to the district court in a contested paternity action unless all of the following have occurred:
 - a. Paternity testing has been completed.
 - b. The results of the paternity test have been issued to all parties.
 - c. A timely written objection to paternity establishment or paternity test results has been received from a party, or a timely written request for a court hearing on the issue of support has been received from a party by child support services, or child support services has requested a court hearing on child support services' own initiative.
4. A matter shall be certified to the district court in the county in which the notice was filed pursuant to [section 252F.3, subsection 3](#).
5. The court shall set the matter for hearing and notify the parties of the time of and place for hearing.
6. If the court determines that the putative father is the legal father, the court shall establish the amount of the accrued and accruing child support pursuant to the guidelines established under [section 598.21B](#), and shall establish medical support pursuant to [chapter 252E](#).
7. If the putative father or another party contesting paternity fails to appear at the hearing, upon a showing that proper notice has been provided to the party, the court shall find the party in default and enter an appropriate order establishing paternity and support.

[93 Acts, ch 79, §18; 94 Acts, ch 1171, §34; 97 Acts, ch 175, §86; 2005 Acts, ch 69, §19; 2007 Acts, ch 218, §177, 178, 187; 2008 Acts, ch 1019, §18, 20; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §908](#)

Referred to in [§252F.3](#)

252F.6 Filing with the district court.

Following issuance of an order by the department, the order shall be presented to an appropriate district court judge for review and approval. Unless a defect appears on the face of the order, the district court shall approve the order. Upon approval by the district court judge, the order shall be filed in the district court in the county in which the notice was filed pursuant to [section 252F.3, subsection 3](#). Upon filing, the order has the same force and effect as a district court order.

[93 Acts, ch 79, §19; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §909](#)

252F.7 Report to state registrar of vital statistics.

Upon the filing of an order with the district court pursuant to [this chapter](#), the clerk of the district court shall report the information from the order to the state registrar of vital statistics in the manner provided in [section 600B.36](#).

[93 Acts, ch 79, §20; 2001 Acts, ch 24, §41; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §910](#)

252F.8 Waiver of time limitations.

1. A putative father or other party may waive the time limitations established in [this chapter](#).

2. If a party does not contest paternity or wish to request a conference or court hearing on the issue of support, upon receipt of a signed statement from the putative father and any other party that may contest establishment of paternity, waiving the time limitations, the department shall enter an order establishing paternity and support and the court may approve the order, notwithstanding the expiration of the period of the time limitations if paternity is established.

3. If a putative father or other party waives the time limitations and an order establishing paternity or determining support, or both, is entered under [this chapter](#), the signed statement of the putative father and other party waiving the time limitations shall be filed with the order.

[93 Acts, ch 79, §21; 94 Acts, ch 1171, §35; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §911](#)

Referred to in [§252F.3](#)