

The **Bear-y** Best Resource Guide

for New Parents

*Taking Care of You and
Your New Little Cub!*



Welcome to the World, Little One!

There's a lot to learn and prepare for! This guide is here to support you through this **bear-y** special time, helping you feel confident and ready as you begin this wonderful adventure.

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Birth Registration

What can I expect after delivery?

Soon after your baby is born, hospital staff or the Birth Registrar will gather important information from you to complete the birth certificate. It's important to provide accurate and honest details to ensure the certificate is correct and to prevent any future delays or issues.

The Birth Registrar will be there to guide you through the process, answer your questions, and make sure everything is handled smoothly. Taking the time to complete this step carefully helps protect your child's identity and secures access to important benefits right from the very beginning.

Here are some questions you may be asked to answer, if they apply:

- What is the mother's race?
- What is the mother's Hispanic origin?
- What is the highest level of education attained by the parent?
- Did the mother receive WIC benefits?

After all the information is gathered, the hospital will send the details to the Office of Vital Records (OVR) to officially register your baby's birth. This step helps create your child's legal identity and ensures access to important services.



It's **"Bear-y"** Important to Understand!
For more information, click on the QR Code to learn more on our New Parent Resource Page.



Birth Certificate

Why is this personal information collected?

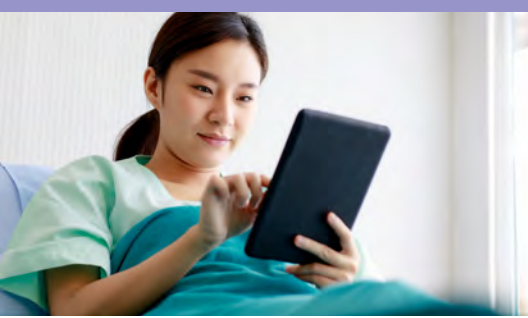
The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and the Office of Vital Records (OVR) ask for this information to help improve the health of parents and babies in your community. Accurate details allow them to track important things like birth rates and infant health, which in turn helps create better health programs and services for families. By sharing this information, you're helping make sure everyone gets the care they need.

What information is included on my baby's birth certificate?

The standard short-form birth certificate typically includes the following essential details:

- State File Number
- Child's Full Name, Date of Birth, Sex, Place of Birth (City or County)
- Mother/Parent I's Full Maiden Name, Age, Birth State/Country
- Father/Parent II's Full Name, Age, Birth State/Country
- Date Record Filed





How can I order my baby’s certificate?

Completing your baby’s birth certificate is quick and easy!

At the hospital, you and the birth father or partner, if applicable, can review and sign the certificate electronically. The hospital then securely sends the information directly to the Office of Vital Records (OVR) for certification and filing. During this process, you can conveniently pay online by debit or credit card, and in most cases, pick up the certificate within days at your local health department, DMV, or the Office of Vital Records in Richmond. You also have the option to have the certificate mailed directly to you.

If the hospital’s electronic system isn’t an option, don’t worry—you can apply online or fill out a paper form with the birth registrar. Payment by check or money order may be accepted if the hospital allows. Once processed, the Office of Vital Records will mail the certified copy(ies) directly to the address supplied.

When the birth certificate arrives by mail it will not be in an envelope. Instead, it will be in the form of a pressure sealed self-mailer as pictured above.

Scan this QR code to access “**Bear-y**” helpful information on this topic!



Names

What is a “maiden” name?

This means your full birth name—or any legally changed name—except your married last name. If you had no last name at birth or your country doesn’t use one, you can leave it blank.

What can I name my baby?

Choosing your baby’s name is a “**Bear-y**” important decision. Virginia allows any name, but the Social Security Administration (SSA) does not accept names with special characters or accents through electronic submission. If your baby’s name includes these, you’ll need to apply for a Social Security card directly with the SSA.

What if my baby isn’t named before I leave the hospital?

OVR asked the birth registrar to assign the baby your last name and send the certificate to us. However, please understand no birth certificate or social security card can be ordered when this occurs.



Can I use more than one surname (last name) for my baby?

You're free to choose any name for your child, but it's helpful to consider your situation—especially with dual citizenship, as passport matters can be more complex if the parents aren't married and paternity isn't acknowledged.

How do I change my baby's name after it's been filed with Vital Records?

You can change your child's first and middle names anytime within their first year by submitting an Affidavit for Correction and paying a small fee. Changing the last name after 30 days requires a court order from the Circuit Court.



Choose **Your Baby's Name** Before Birth

BABY NAME PLANNER			
BOY		GIRL	
First Name	Middle Name	First Name	Middle Name

Social Security

How do I request a Social Security number for my newborn?

It's a good idea to apply for your baby's Social Security number when you order the birth certificate at the hospital. The Office of Vital Records (OVR) will send your request electronically to the Social Security Administration (SSA).

You can expect to receive your baby's Social Security card in the mail within 6 weeks.

“Bear-y” Important to know! If the mom's, dad's, or baby's name has an accent mark or a special character, the SSA won't accept the request. Don't worry—hyphenated names are totally fine!

How do I request a Social Security card for my new baby if I didn't request it at the hospital?



If you decide not to request the card at the hospital, you'll need to order it yourself by scheduling an appointment at your local SSA office to begin the process. Be sure to bring your child's birth certificate!

Who do I contact if I do not receive the card in the mail as expected?

If you haven't received your baby's Social Security card after waiting the usual processing time, please contact your local Social Security office. You can also call 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778), Mon-Fri, from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Visit their website at SSA.GOV for more information.

Home Births

How do I register my baby's birth after an unexpected home delivery?

If you give birth at home in Virginia, and transferred to a birthing center, most are ready to assist you with the paperwork right after your baby is born. If you are not transferred, simply reach out to your local health department promptly. **Registering your baby within 30 days ensures everything is in order.**

If I have my baby at home with a midwife or doula, how is the birth certificate registered?

A midwife or doula acts as the certifier, confirming your baby was born alive. They help complete the birth certificate with details like name, date, and time, then submit it to the local health department or Office of Vital Records.

What is the process to register my baby's birth after a planned home delivery?

If you give birth at home in Virginia, **you must register the birth with your local health department within 30 days.** Hospital staff can assist if you're transferred there immediately after the birth. If you need extra time to register the birth, you'll be asked to provide proof of the following:

- Proof of Pregnancy
- Proof of Live Birth
- Home Birth – Proof of Virginia Residency or Proof of Birth at Another Location Within Virginia

It's **"Bear-y"** Necessary! If you are unable to provide this documentation you will need to seek assistance from a legal representative or your local circuit court.

Family Details

What if I am married but not to the biological father?

If you're married anytime 10 months prior to the birth of your baby, your spouse is legally considered the father in Virginia. If you need help adding the biological dad's name to the birth certificate, please contact the Office of Vital Records. You can also reach out to your local Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court/Circuit Court to legally establish paternity.

Would I be able to add the father's name to my baby's birth certificate at the hospital if he's passed away?

If the mother is unmarried and the father has passed away, his name cannot be added to the birth certificate at the hospital. For unmarried parents, an Acknowledgment of Paternity (AOP) form must be completed in the presence of the mother, father, and baby.

However, if the parents are married, the father's name can be included on the birth certificate.

What should I know about birth registration if we are a same-sex couple?

In Virginia, the birth registration process is the same for married same-sex couples as it is for opposite-sex couples, with both parents usually listed on the birth certificate. For unmarried same-sex couples, only the birth mother's name will appear on the certificate. To ensure the other parent has legal rights, a court order or second-parent adoption may be needed.



Adoption

What should I know about my baby's birth certificate if they are being adopted?

When a baby is born in a Virginia hospital, the hospital will gather the birth parents' information and send it to the Office of Vital Records to create the official birth certificate. The adoptive parents don't register the birth at this time, and their information isn't included at the hospital. After the adoption is finalized in court, a new birth certificate is created that lists the adoptive parents as the legal parents. This new certificate replaces the original one and becomes the baby's official birth record.

What should I know if we are adopting a baby immediately after the birth?

Once the adoption is final, the adoptive parents or their attorney can request the new birth certificate from the Office of Vital Records. This updated certificate will show you as the baby's legal parents.

What if the baby is born out-of-state but the adoption is taking place in Virginia?

If a baby is **born outside of Virginia**, Virginia **cannot** issue a birth certificate, even if the adoption is finalized here. In that case, you'll need to follow the **birth state's process** to request an amended certificate. However, **if both the birth and adoption** occur in Virginia, you'll follow Virginia's process through the Office of Vital Records to obtain the new birth certificate.

Scan this QR code to access “**Bear-y**” helpful information on this topic!



Surrogacy

What should I know if we are using a surrogate to deliver our baby?

In surrogacy cases, the woman who carries the baby (called the Gestational Carrier) and her spouse (if she has one) will be listed as the baby’s parents on the original birth certificate when the baby is born. Before the intended parent or parents can be listed on a new birth certificate, the Gestational Carrier and her spouse must give up their parental rights, following Virginia law.

Who must be listed as the mother on the birth certificate?

When we say “mother” on the birth certificate, we mean the person who physically gave birth to the baby. So, the certificate will show information about the person who delivered the baby. If a surrogate carrier was involved, only the birth mother’s details will be on the certificate sent to OVR by the hospital. Don’t worry—once it arrives, OVR will handle any necessary updates on our end.

Scan this QR code to access “**Bear-y**” helpful information on this topic!



Five Helpful Tips for New Parents

1) Ask for Help

This tip is key! If you're feeling overwhelmed, don't be afraid to ask for help. Friends and family are ready to support you—whether it's with chores or watching your baby so you can take a break.

2) Grab A Nap When You Can

Some things can wait—rest can't. When your baby naps, take a break and catch some sleep to recharge.

3) Organize Your Emergency Info

With a little one, be prepared. Save important info—doctor, hospital, allergies, insurance—in your phone for quick access in emergencies.

4) Connect with Other Parents

This stage can be tough. Connect with other new parents and experienced ones for advice and support. Having people to lean on makes things easier and more fun.

5) Trust Your Instincts

You know your baby best. If something feels off, don't wait—call your pediatrician for peace of mind.



Voluntary Paternity Establishment

What ID does the registrar need to notarize the voluntary acknowledgment of paternity form?

In Virginia, both parents must agree on who the biological father is before completing the voluntary acknowledgment of paternity form. The birth registrar will guide you through the process, explain your rights, and ensure everything is clear.

To notarize the form, the registrar will need to verify your identity. You will be asked to provide one of the following forms of ID:

1. A United States passport
2. A United States passport card
3. A certificate of United States citizenship
4. A certificate of naturalization
5. A foreign passport
6. A United States green card with photograph
7. A state issued driver's license
8. A state issued identification card
9. A United States military identification card

Having your ID ready will help make the process quick and smooth. This step is important to legally establish paternity, which can affect your child's rights and benefits. If you have any questions, the registrar is there to help!

Would you like to know more about voluntary paternity establishment in the Commonwealth of Virginia?



SCAN HERE
to learn more





I am not married. How do I add the father's name to my baby's birth certificate?

If you are unmarried, you and the biological father have the option to complete a voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity (AOP) form prior to discharge from the hospital. The birth registrar or designated staff member will be available to assist you with filling out the form and will notarize it on the spot, making the process quick and convenient. Completing the AOP establishes legal paternity, which can be important for parental rights and benefits for your child.

If you are unable to complete the AOP before leaving the hospital, don't worry—you can still submit the form later to the Office of Vital Records. This can be done either in person or by mail, whichever is more convenient for you. However, please note that if the father's name is added after discharge, there is a small processing fee.

Taking care of the AOP early helps ensure your child's legal rights are protected and can simplify matters related to custody, support, and medical decisions. We encourage you to complete this important step for your child.

Can paternity be changed after it's established?

Yes, in certain circumstances, it's possible to disestablish paternity and establish a different father. This typically involves a court order and legal proceedings, potentially including DNA testing.



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES

DCSE Division of Child
Support Enforcement

Secure Your Child's Future – It's as Easy as A, B, C!

Child Support Services can help your child. Here's how to get started.



A. Sign up for Child Support Services

Thousands of families in Virginia already use our services—and you can too!

Both parents or caretakers can apply. We're here to help.

B. Establish Paternity

Establishing paternity helps your child get health insurance, know their family medical history, and get support from both parents. If you weren't married when your child was born, either parent can ask for help to establish paternity.

C. Create Your Online Account



Use the QR code to start your secure application online today.

D. Other Services

We have programs to help parents who may have a hard time supporting their child with money. Ask us about our Family Engagement Services.

Have questions? Visit:
www.dss.virginia.gov/family/dcse



Hours:
Monday through Friday
7 a.m. to 6 p.m.



Phone:
800-468-8894



Email:
askdcse@dss.virginia.gov

Childhood Immunizations



Immunizations help prevent serious diseases like measles. Making sure your child is up to date on their immunizations is a little thing you can do to make a big difference.

Which vaccines does my child need?

Talk to your child's pediatrician about the vaccines that are recommended for your child.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides a recommended schedule for the best time for your child to receive a vaccine.

Where can I find no-cost vaccines for my family?

Your child may be able to get no-cost vaccines through CDC's Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program at healthcare providers' offices, pharmacies, and local health departments that are enrolled in the VFC Program.

You can learn more about childhood vaccines and find a VFC provider by visiting <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/immunization> or by scanning the QR code to the right.



Schedule Your Postpartum Visit

I just had a baby! Now What?



Schedule your postpartum visit before leaving the hospital.
Don't forget to show up!

Why Do I Need Postpartum Care?

Your body is recovering from pregnancy, labor, and delivery. A healthcare provider can discuss urgent maternal warning signs, any postpartum mental health support, and birth control options.

Don't forget about you! Your health is just as important as your new baby's health.



Can My Health Department Help?

Yes! Contact your health department to learn more about WIC, home visiting support, safe sleep, car seat education, family planning, community resources, and so much more!

For more information please contact your local health department.



Newborn Screening Programs

Know Your Baby's Newborn Screening Results

Ask if these tests were done!

- ✓ Newborn Bloodspot Screening
- ✓ Critical Congenital Heart Disease Screening
- ✓ Hearing Screening

Newborn Screening: CCHD



Critical Congenital Heart Disease

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends screening all newborns for Critical Congenital Heart Disease (CCHD) after 24 hours and before discharge. Pulse oximetry—a painless, non-invasive test measuring blood oxygen—can detect heart defects in babies without symptoms. CCHD affects about 3 in 1,000 newborns, can be life-threatening, and requires treatment within the first year. Early detection ensures timely care.

CCHD Newborn Screening Facts

- Newborns are screened for CCHD around 24 hours old using painless, non-invasive pulse oximetry. Sensors are placed on the right hand and a foot to measure blood oxygen levels, detecting low oxygen caused by CCHD—even in babies without symptoms.
- Babies who fail the screening are retested and may need further evaluation, such as an echocardiogram to confirm or rule out CCHD.

CCHD Pulse Oximeter Placement:



Pulse oximeters placed on right hand and foot to test for CCHD

Newborn Bloodspot Screening



The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Newborn Bloodspot Screening (NBS)

program provides early identification and care coordination for infants who may be at risk of certain rare, potentially life-threatening disorders. Some of the screened disorders may sound familiar: Sickle Cell Anemia and Cystic Fibrosis.

How does it work?

- A simple heel stick performed 24-48 hours after birth allows drops of blood to be applied to a paper card.
- The paper card is sent to the state laboratory for screening. Screening happens 7 days/week, 365 days/year!
- Screening results are sent to a team of nurses with the NBS program.
- NBS nurses call urgent results to pediatricians, specialty care providers, and families to coordinate care and diagnostic testing.



Common questions:

- Is NBS necessary when other prenatal and/or genetic testing was done?
 - Yes. While prenatal and/or genetic testing is helpful, the tests have limitations and may not detect the same disorders that are screened through NBS.
- How will I know my baby's results?
 - The pediatrician listed on the screening card will receive a copy of the screening results. If you change pediatricians for any reason, please have your new pediatrician contact the NBS program to request the results.

Save your baby's NBS information!

Knowing your baby's NBS result can make a difference in their health. Ask your pediatrician for the results during your first visit:

Device ID: _____ Collection Date: _____

Questions?

NBS nurses are staffed 7days/week, 365 days/year to assist you! Call 804-864-7711 or email newborn_screening@vdh.virginia.gov.

Scan the QR code to visit the website for more information, including resources and a full list of screened disorders.



Early Hearing Detection and Intervention



The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Virginia Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (VA

EHDI) program provides support to families regarding newborn hearing screening and congenital cytomegalovirus screening (CMV).

Did You Know?

- Shortly after birth, your baby will receive a hearing screening.
- Hearing loss affects about 3 in 1,000 newborns, making it the most common birth defect.
- Your baby's ears begin developing around 9 weeks of pregnancy.
- Babies start to hear at 18 weeks and respond to sounds by 25 weeks.
- Some babies may also be tested for CMV based on their hearing results.
- CMV is a common virus spread through close contact with saliva or urine from young children (ages 1–5).
- About 1 in 3 pregnant women with CMV pass the virus to their unborn baby.

Scan the QR code to visit the E H D I website for more information and resources.



The Virginia Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (VA EHDI) program recommends that parents regularly monitor their child's speech and developmental milestones.

Did you know that speech and language development start at birth?

No matter your baby's hearing test results, it's important to regularly monitor their hearing and speech milestones. Babies can use vibrations and visual cues, which might seem like they hear you, so tracking development helps catch any hearing loss early.

Here are some milestones to guide you in monitoring your baby's language development:

Birth to 3 Months Old

- Reacts to sudden loud sounds (blinks or startles)
- Calms and smiles when spoken to
- Makes simple sounds like "ooh" or "ahh"

3 to 6 Months Old

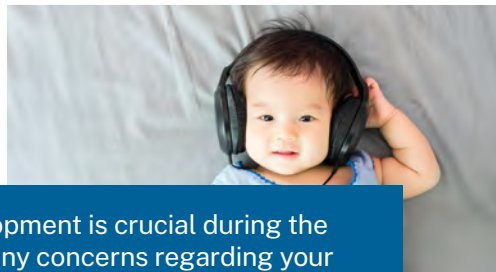
- Searches for sound with eyes
- Produces a variety of sounds, including squeals and chuckles

6 to 9 Months Old

- Turns head toward sounds
- Babbling with sounds like "baba," "mama," and "gaga"

9 to 12 Months Old

- Repeats simple words and sounds
- Uses "mama" and "dada" correctly



Early language and speech development is crucial during the first few years of life. If you have any concerns regarding your child, talk to your baby's provider today.



The Virginia Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (VA EHDI) program will communicate results for hearing screening and congenital Cytomegalovirus (cCMV) screening with families soon after hospital discharge.

Did you know?

- If needed, your child should have a repeat hearing screen by 1 month of age
- If present, hearing loss should be identified by 3 months of age
- If needed, your child should have confirmatory testing for CMV before 21 days of life
- About 1 out of 4 babies born with cCMV will have hearing loss at birth or develop hearing loss during the first few years of life

VA EHDI along with your pediatrician, will support and guide you every step of the way and communicate next steps regarding your baby's hearing and cCMV results via text messages, robo calls, and phone calls. VA EHDI has created MyEHDI, a parent portal to simplify how parents can stay informed about their baby's hearing and CMV health.

Scan the QR code to visit the EHDI website for more information and resources.



Early Childhood Home Visiting

EARLYIMPACT **You Don't Have to Do This Alone**
— VIRGINIA — **– Home Visiting Can Help**

Free support for you and your baby—from pregnancy through the early years. Every new parent deserves a strong start, let us walk beside you!

Virginia's home visiting programs offer free, personalized support for families during pregnancy and throughout early childhood. A home visitor—like a nurse, educator, or family support specialist—comes to you, in your home or wherever you feel comfortable. They listen without judgment, celebrate your wins, and help you handle the hard stuff.

Whether you're a first-time parent or growing your family, home visiting can give you the confidence, tools, and resources you need.



Home visitors can support you with:

- Understanding your baby's development and milestones
- Breastfeeding, feeding, and sleep routines
- Finding housing, food, or baby essentials
- Navigating insurance or healthcare questions
- Managing stress, anxiety, or postpartum concerns
- Connecting to childcare, job training, or local services
- Just having someone to talk to who understands

Every parent deserves support.
We're here when you're ready.

Ready to learn more? Go to www.EarlyImpactVA.org or use this convenient QR code to find programs in your community.



Care Connection for Children



Care Connection for Children is a statewide network of Centers of Excellence for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN). It leads efforts to improve specialty medical services, coordinate care and insurance benefits, manage funding, provide information and referrals, offer family support, and train community providers on CYSHCN topics.



Scan the QR code to visit the Care Connection for Children website for more information.

Eligibility

- Birth to 21 years of age
- Virginia Resident

Physical Eligibility

- Require health care or support services beyond what's typical for their age, including special treatments or accommodations at home or school;
- Experience limitations in physical, cognitive, emotional, or social growth and development compared to their peers;
- Depend on medications, special diets, medical technology, assistive devices, or personal assistance to manage these limitations and participate in daily life.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

WIC helps families by providing:

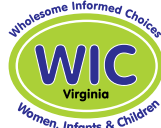
- Personalized nutrition education to help the whole family eat better
- Breastfeeding support through lactation experts, classes, peer groups and breast pumps for moms in need
- WIC food benefits that can be used at the grocery store to help provide the right foods to families
- Referrals to local health and community organizations to connect families with the resources they need



Contact your local WIC office or call the
Virginia WIC office at **1-888-942-3663**

VirginiaWIC.com

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



LexisNexis® VitalChek® is a trusted source for ordering birth certificates and other vital records online. Our goal is to make ordering your new baby's birth certificate as simple, fast, and stress-free as possible so you can spend time on the things that truly matter.

- Simple, secure 24/7 ordering online or by phone
- Express delivery available nationwide
- Government-certified for most official uses
- Authorized online provider to more than 500 vital records agencies across the U.S.

Ready to Get Started?
Scan the QR code to
visit VitalChek.com



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VDH VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH

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Richmond VA 23218-1000
804-662-6200
www.vdh.virginia.gov/vital-records/



Scan this QR code to explore more detailed information on the “**Bear-y**” important topics featured in this brochure!

