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Contact: Jill Yablonski  
[Journalnews@bos.blackwellpublishing.net](mailto:Journalnews@bos.blackwellpublishing.net)  
781-388-8448  
Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

## Fathers more involved when paternity is established in the hospital

A study published in the recent issue of *Journal of Marriage and Family* examines the effectiveness of in-hospital paternity establishment for babies born to unwed parents. The research shows that though establishing paternity at any time increases the amount of formal and informal child support and the amount of father-child visits, in-hospital establishment is associated with better outcomes. Analysis of interviews conducted a year after the baby's birth with mothers who remained single showed that fathers, who were named in the hospital, are fifteen percentage points more likely to have seen their child in the past month. Those whose paternity was established outside of the hospital are only seven points more likely to visit than those who did not have their paternity established. "These finds suggest that, even among nonresidential parents, in-hospital paternity establishment is associated with higher levels of father involvement than establishing paternity outside the hospital," authors Ronald Mincy, Irwin Garfinkel, and Lenna Nepomnyaschy state.

Using the Fragile Families and Child well-being survey, the authors find that establishment rates are high, at sixty-nine percent, and six out of seven are established in the hospital. In-hospital paternity establishment programs have been a federal requirement since 1993. They provide unmarried parents with information about the benefits of paternity and require hospitals to inform parents about the legal obligations that occur, e.g. child support, once paternity is established. These programs are a friendly way to aid non-traditional families. "We believe that increasing fathers' involvement very early in the lives of their nonmarital children may prove to be beneficial for their children's long-term well-being, and we plan to examine these relationships in future work," the authors conclude.

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This study is published in the August issue of the *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Media wishing to receive a PDF of this article please contact [journalnews@bos.blackwellpublishing.net](mailto:journalnews@bos.blackwellpublishing.net)

The *Journal of Marriage and Family* (JMF) has been a leading research journal in the family field for over 60 years. JMF features original research and theory, research interpretation and reviews, and critical discussion concerning all aspects of marriage, other forms of close relationships, and families. It is published by the National Council on Family Relations. Information about the National Council on Family Relations can be found at [www.ncfr.org](http://www.ncfr.org).

Ronald Mincy is a professor in the School of Social Work at Columbia University. He worked on the development of federal paternity establishment policies in the Clinton Administration.

Dr. Mincy is available for questions and interviews.

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