
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**NATURAL FATHERS OF
CHILDREN BORN OUT
OF WEDLOCK ACT**

REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA

**WET OP NATUURLIKE VADERS
VAN BUIITE-EGTELIKE KINDERS**

No , 1997

GENERAL EXPLANATORY NOTE:

- [] Words in bold type in square brackets indicate omissions from existing enactments.
- Words underlined with a solid line indicate insertions in existing enactments.
-
-

ACT

To make provision for the possibility of access to and custody and guardianship of children born out of wedlock by their natural fathers; to provide for the limitation on the publishing of certain particulars of certain applications and enquiries; to provide for the notification of natural fathers of any intended adoption of their children born out of wedlock; to amend the Mediation in Certain Divorce Matters Act, 1987, so as to effect certain consequential amendments; and to amend the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992, so as to further regulate the alteration of the surname of certain minors; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

BE IT ENACTED by the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, as follows:—

Definitions

1. In this Act, unless the context otherwise indicates—
- (i) “child born out of wedlock” means a child whose natural parents were not married to each other at the time of such child’s conception or at any time thereafter; (i) 5
 - (ii) “court” means a division of the High Court within whose area of jurisdiction a child born out of wedlock is domiciled or ordinarily resident; (iii)
 - (iii) “Family Advocate” means a Family Advocate appointed under section 2(1) of the Mediation in Certain Divorce Matters Act, 1987 (Act No. 24 of 1987); (ii) 10
 - (iv) “natural” means related by blood; (iv)
 - (v) “natural father” does not include a male person whose relationship with the child exists merely because he was a gamete donor in artificial fertilization of a person as defined in section 1 of the Human Tissue Act, 1983 (Act No. 65 of 15 1983), whereby that child was fathered, in the absence of any prior love relationship between the natural parents. (v)

Access to and custody and guardianship of children born out of wedlock by natural fathers

2. (1) A court may on application by the natural father of a child born out of wedlock make an order granting the natural father access rights to or custody or guardianship of the child on the conditions determined by the court. 5
- (2) An application referred to in subsection (1) shall not be granted—
- (a) unless the court is satisfied that it is in the best interests of the child; and
 - (b) until the court, if an enquiry is instituted by the Family Advocate in terms of section 3, has considered the report and recommendations referred to in that section. 10
- (3) For the purposes of subsection (2) the court may cause any investigation which it may deem necessary, to be carried out and may order any person to appear before it, and may order the parties or any one of them to pay the costs of the investigation and appearance.
- (4) If it appears to a court in the course of any proceedings in respect of an application referred to in subsection (1) that an application for an order of adoption of the child concerned has been made in terms of the Child Care Act, 1983 (Act No. 74 of 1983), the court— 15
- (a) shall request the Family Advocate to furnish it with a report and recommendations as contemplated in section 3; and 20
 - (b) may suspend the proceedings in respect of the application referred to in subsection (1) on such conditions as it may deem appropriate.
- (5) In considering an application referred to in subsection (1), the court shall, where applicable, take the following circumstances into account:
- (a) The relationship between the applicant and the natural mother, and, in particular, whether either party has a history of violence against or abusing each other or the child; 25
 - (b) the relationship of the child with the applicant and the natural mother or either of them or with proposed adoptive parents (if any) or any other person;
 - (c) the effect that separating the child from the applicant or the natural mother or proposed adoptive parents (if any) or any other person is likely to have on the child; 30
 - (d) the attitude of the child in relation to the granting of the application;
 - (e) the degree of commitment that the applicant has shown towards the child, and, in particular, the extent to which the applicant contributed to the lying-in expenses incurred by the natural mother in connection with the birth of the child and to expenditure incurred by her in connection with the maintenance of the child from his or her birth to the date on which an order (if any) in respect of the payment of maintenance by the applicant for the child has been made and the extent to which the applicant complies with such order; 35 40
 - (f) whether the child was born of a customary union concluded according to indigenous law or custom or of a marriage concluded under a system of any religious law; and
 - (g) any other fact that, in the opinion of the court, should be taken into account.
- (6) A court granting an application under subsection (1), may make any order which it may deem fit, and may in particular, if in its opinion it would be in the best interests of the child to do so, grant to either party the sole guardianship (which shall include the power to consent to the marriage of the child) or the sole custody of the child, and the court may order that, on the predecease of the party to whom the sole guardianship or sole custody of the child is granted, a person other than the surviving party shall be the guardian or custodian of the child, either jointly with or to the exclusion of the surviving party. 50
- (7) For the purposes of this section the court may appoint a legal representative to represent a child at the proceedings and may order the parties or any one of them to pay the costs of the representation. 55

Powers and duties of Family Advocate

3. (1) The Family Advocate shall, after an application has been lodged for—

- (a) an order granting access rights to or custody or guardianship of a child born out of wedlock under section 2; or
- (b) the variation, rescission or suspension of such order,
- if so requested by any party to such proceedings or the court concerned, institute an enquiry to enable him or her to furnish the court at the hearing of such application with a report and recommendations on any matter concerning the welfare of the child concerned or regarding any such matter as is referred to him or her by the court. 5
- (2) The Family Advocate may, after any application referred to in subsection (1) has been lodged, if he or she deems it in the interests of the child concerned, apply to the court concerned for an order authorizing him or her to institute an enquiry referred to in that subsection. 10
- (3) The Family Advocate may, if he or she deems it in the interests of the child concerned, and shall, if so requested by a court, appear at the hearing of any application referred to in subsections (1) and (2) and may adduce any available evidence relevant to the application and cross-examine witnesses giving evidence thereat. 15

Rescission, suspension or variation of orders

4. (1) An order in regard to access rights to or custody or guardianship of a child born out of wedlock made under this Act, may at any time on application be rescinded or varied or, in the case of an order in regard to access rights to such child, be suspended by a court if the court finds that there is sufficient reason therefor: Provided that if any enquiry is instituted by the Family Advocate in terms of section 3, and unless the court is of the opinion that the best interests of the child otherwise requires, such an order in regard to access rights to or custody or guardianship of such child shall not be rescinded or varied or, in the case of an order in regard to access rights to such child, not be suspended before the report and recommendations referred to in that section have been considered by the court. 20 25
- (2) A court other than the court which made an order referred to in subsection (1) may rescind, vary or suspend such order if the child concerned is domiciled or ordinarily resident in the area of jurisdiction of such first-mentioned court.

Limitation on publishing of certain particulars of certain applications and enquiries 30

5. (1) (a) Except for publishing the names of the parties to an application referred to in section 3(1)(a) or (b), or that such application is pending in a court of law, or the order of the court, no person shall publish for the information of the public or any section of the public any particulars— 35
- (i) of such an application or any information which comes to light in the course of such an application; or
- (ii) of an enquiry instituted by a Family Advocate in terms of this Act.
- (b) The provisions of paragraph (a) shall with the necessary changes apply to proceedings relating to the enforcement or variation of any order made under this Act. 40
- (2) Subsection (1) shall not apply in regard to the publishing of particulars or information—
- (a) for the purposes of the administration of justice;
- (b) in respect of which the court is of the opinion that the publishing thereof will be in the public interest; 45
- (c) in a *bona fide* law report which does not form part of any other publication than a series of reports of the proceedings in courts of law; or
- (d) for the advancement of or use in a particular profession or science.
- (3) Any person who in contravention of this section publishes any particulars or information shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year. 50

Certain notice required at adoption proceedings of children born out of wedlock

6. (1) Subject to subsection (2), a children's court to which an application for an order

of adoption of a child born out of wedlock is made in terms of the Child Care Act, 1983 (Act No. 74 of 1983), shall not grant the application unless it is satisfied that the natural father of the child concerned has been given reasonable written notice of the intended adoption.

(2) A notice referred to in subsection (1) may be dispensed with if the children's court is satisfied that—

- (a) the natural father—
 - (i) cannot be identified; or
 - (ii) cannot be found, notwithstanding reasonable efforts to do so;
- (b) the child was born of an incestuous relationship or as a result of rape; or
- (c) it is in the best interests of the child that the requirement of notification be dispensed with.

(3) For the purposes of this section the Minister of Justice may, after consultation with the Minister for Welfare and Population Development, by notice in the *Gazette* prescribe the following matters:

- (a) The practice and procedure in connection with the issuing and service of a notice referred to in subsection (1), including the time within which notice shall be given;
- (b) the form and content of such notice and any other form required in complying with subsection (1);
- (c) the duties of officers of a children's court in respect of the issuing of such notice;
- (d) the fees payable in respect of the service of such notice;
- (e) any matter which he or she may deem necessary or expedient to prescribe for the attainment of the objects of this section.

(4) Before the prescriptions referred to in subsection (3) are published in the *Gazette*, they must be submitted to Parliament and tabled as soon as possible.

Transitional provision

7. The regulations made under section 5 of the Mediation in Certain Divorce Matters Act, 1987, as they existed immediately before the commencement of this Act, shall, until amended by virtue of section 9 of this Act, also be applicable, with the necessary changes, in respect of enquiries by the Family Advocate in terms of this Act.

Amendment of section 3 of Act 24 of 1987

8. Section 3 of the Mediation in Certain Divorce Matters Act, 1987, is hereby amended by the substitution for subsection (1) of the following subsection:

- “(1) Subject to the provisions of this section the Minister may appoint at each division of the Supreme Court of South Africa one or more suitably qualified or experienced persons to be styled the Family Counsellor, to assist the Family Advocate with an enquiry [**referred to in section 4(1)**] in terms of any applicable law.”.

Amendment of section 5 of Act 24 of 1987

9. Section 5 of the Mediation in Certain Divorce Matters Act, 1987, is hereby amended—

- (a) by the substitution for paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of the following paragraph:
 - “(a) the procedure to be followed in relation to the institution of an enquiry [**referred to in section 4**] by a Family Advocate in terms of any applicable law, and the manner in which the report and recommendations [**mentioned in that section**] emanating from such enquiry shall be produced in court;”;
- (b) by the substitution for paragraphs (c) and (d) of subsection (1) of the following paragraphs, respectively:
 - “(c) the payment by the State of remuneration and allowances to a Family Advocate appointed under section 2(1) to act in a specific divorce action or an application in terms of any applicable law or in

- more than one such action or application and a Family Counsellor, for services rendered, the determination of criteria for the payment of such remuneration and allowances, the manner of calculation of such remuneration and allowances and the recovery thereof by the State from a party or parties to **[a divorce action or an] such action** or application [referred to in section 4(1)(b) and (2)(b)] by means of an order as to costs by the court; 5
- (d) the appointment by a Family Advocate or a Family Counsellor of a person or persons to assist him or her with an enquiry referred to in **[section 4] paragraph (a)** and the payment by the State of remuneration to such person or persons;” 10

Substitution of section 5A of Act 24 of 1987, as inserted by section 26 of Act 139 of 1992

10. The following section is hereby substituted for section 5A of the Mediation in Certain Divorce Matters Act, 1987: 15

“Court may condone non-compliance with provision of regulation

5A. The court may, at the trial of an action or the hearing of an application **[referred to in section 4] in terms of any applicable law**, condone non-compliance with any provision of a regulation made **[in terms of] under** section 5.”. 20

Amendment of section 25 of Act 51 of 1992

11. Section 25 of the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992, is hereby amended—

- (a) by the substitution for paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of the following paragraph: 25
- “(a) the birth of any **[illegitimate]** minor born out of wedlock has been registered and the mother of that minor marries any person other than the natural father of the minor;”; and
- (b) by the substitution for paragraphs (b) and (c) of subsection (1) of the following paragraphs, respectively: 30
- “(b) the father of any minor is deceased or his or her parents’ marriage has been dissolved and his or her mother remarries or his or her mother as a widow or divorcee resumes a surname which she bore at any prior time and the father, where the marriage has been dissolved, consents thereto in writing, unless a competent court grants exemption from such consent; 35
- (c) the birth of any **[illegitimate]** minor born out of wedlock has been registered under the surname of his or her natural father and the natural father consents thereto in writing, unless a competent court grants exemption from such consent; or”.

Short title and commencement 40

12. This Act shall be called the Natural Fathers of Children Born out of Wedlock Act, 1997, and shall come into operation on a date fixed by the President by proclamation in the *Gazette*.