



State-by-State Information about How to Find Family Members Who Have Been Separated by Adoption

Mutual Consent Registry: This is how all parties involved in adoption provide information on whether they are willing or unwilling to have identifying information disclosed. These registries vary from state to state but generally the consent is needed from one birth parent and either the adoptive child or adoptive parents depending on the age of the child to release this information. In most states, the parties need to file an affidavit in order to release the information.

Non identifying Information: This is information about birth parents and children that does not give away the identity of the individuals. This information could include this different information: when and where the adoptive child was born, how old the birth parents are and a brief physical description, race, ethnicity, medical information and religion of the birth parents, how much schooling the birth parents have, why the child was put up for adoption and any other children each birth parent may have. All states have provisions in place about who can obtain this information and when. Usually it is given to adoptive parents at the time of adoption. Adoptive children can request to receive this information generally once they turn 18 years of age.

Identifying Information: Information that reveals a person's identity, such as last name, address, phone number and detailed family history. In the field of adoption search and reunion, information allowing a birth parent, adoptive parent or an adoptee to be identified and located.

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Nonidentifying information may be released, upon request, to:

- The following persons may participate in the adoption registry:
 - An adoptive parent or legal guardian if the adopted person is under age 18, deceased, or incapacitated.
 - A birth parent
 - A birth sibling or half-sibling who is age 18 or older.
 - The legal guardian or custodian of a person under 18 who is the sibling or half-sibling of an adopted person.
 - If a birth parent is deceased, a birth mother, legal father, grandparent, sibling, half-sibling, aunt, uncle, or first cousin of the deceased birth parent.
- Medical or genetic information shall be made available to:
 - The adopted person upon reaching age 18
 - The adopted person's descendants
 - The adoptive parents or the child's legal guardian on petition of the court.

Access to nonidentifying information is limited to:

- The licensed child-placing agency shall obtain medical and genetic information on the birth parents and the child that shall include:
 - A current medical, psychological, and developmental history of the child, including an account of the child's prenatal care, medical condition at birth, results of newborn screening, any drug or medication taken by the child's birth mother during pregnancy.
 - Any subsequent medical, psychological, or psychiatric examination.
 - Any physical, sexual, or emotional abuse suffered by the child.
 - A record of any immunizations and health care received since birth.
 - Relevant information concerning the medical, psychological, and social history of the birth parents.
- Prior to the child being placed for adoption, the licensed child-placing agency shall provide the information described above to the adoptive parents.
- Any medical or genetic information in the court records relating to an adoption must be available to the adopted child upon reaching age 18 and to the adopted child's descendants, adoptive parents, or legal guardian on petition of the court.

Mutual access to identifying information:

- The State Registrar shall maintain a file of the names and addresses of adopted persons and their adoptive and birth parents who have registered with the registry.
 - At the time of registration, each registrant shall indicate the persons with whom contact is desired. A registrant may withdraw from the adoption registry at any time by submitting a written request.
 - The Registrar shall notify each party of the name and address of the other party and of sources of counseling when a request for contact is made.
- An adult adopted person may request the identity or his or her birth parents from the Registrar by: submitting proof that the birth parents are deceased, an affidavit from a blood relative who is not a sibling and who is at least 10 years older than the adopted person verifying that the adopted person lived with the birth parents for 5 years, and a court order authorizing the Registrar to open the original birth certificate to verify the identity of the birth parents. Upon verification of the information, the Registrar will prepare a form identifying the birth parents. This form must be attached to the new birth certificate and provided to the adopted person.
- The State Registrar shall provide upon request each birth parent a contact preference form and a medical history form. A birth parent shall fill out a medical history form if he or she fills out a contact preference form.
- A birth parent also may complete a contact preference form on which He or she may state a preference regarding a contact by an adopted person.
 - The form must indicate whether the birth parent chooses contact, contact through an intermediary, or no contact. Completed contact preference and medical history forms shall be attached to the original birth certificate of the adopted person.
 - A completed contact preference form and medical history form have the same level of confidentiality as the original birth certificate.

Access to original birth certificate:

- The original certificate of birth is not subject to inspection except upon order of the court or pursuant to § 2768.
- An adopted person, his or her attorney, or if the adopted person is deceased, his or her descendants may obtain a copy of that person's original certificate of birth from the State Registrar of Vital Statistics.
- The adopted person must be at least 18 and have been born in this State.
 - The adopted person must file a written application and provide appropriate proof of identification to the State Registrar.
- Upon receipt of the written application and proof of identification and fulfillment of the requirements listed below, the State Registrar shall issue a certified copy of the unaltered original certificate of birth to the applicant.
- The State Registrar may require a waiting period and impose a fee of the noncertified copy. The fees and waiting period imposed under the subsection must be identical to the fees and waiting period generally imposed on persons seeking their own birth certificates.

- If a contact preference or medical history form has been completed and submitted to the State Registrar pursuant to § 2769, the State Registrar also must provide that information.

Maine State Adoption Reunion Registry, Office of Vital Records

Web Link: <http://www.main.gov/dhhs/ocfs/cw/adoption/reunionregistry.htm>

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