



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:

- An adoptive parent
- An adopted person
- A birth parent
- Identifying information may be accessed by:
 - An adopted person who is age 21 or older, or under 21 with the permission of the adoptive parent.
 - A birth parent or member of the birth parent's family after the adopted person has reached age 21.
- These family members shall be limited to the birth grandparents, a brother or sister of a birth parent, or the child of a birth parent. The court, for good cause shown, may allow a relative more distant in degree to petition for disclosure.

Access to nonidentifying information is limited to:

- Reasonably available nonidentifying information may be disclosed upon a written request to the persons listed above. If the adoption facilitator refuses to disclose such information, the individual may petition the superior court.
- The prospective adoptive parent shall be given a family background and child and family social history report about the child.
- The report shall include a chronological history of the circumstances surrounding the adoptive placement and any available psychiatric reports, psychological reports, court reports pertaining to dependency or custody, or school reports.
- Such reports or information shall not reveal the identity of the birth parents of the child but shall contain reasonably available nonidentifying information.

Mutual access to identifying information:

- Any person listed above may petition the court to appoint a confidential intermediary. the intermediary shall search for and discreetly contact the birth parent or adopted person; or if they are not alive or cannot be located within 1 year, the intermediary may attempt to locate members of the birth parents' or adopted person's family.
- If the person is located, the intermediary will ask whether the person consents to a disclosure of identifying information. If the person refuses to consent, the intermediary shall report the refusal to the court and shall refrain from further inquiry without judicial approval. If the person being sought consents to disclosure of his or her identity, the court may then order that the identifying

information be released. If the person being sought is deceased, the court may order disclosure of the identity of the deceased to the petitioner.

- An adopted person age 18 or older may file with the Department of Health a certified statement declaring any one or more of the following:
 - The adopted person refuses to consent to the release of any identifying information to a birth parent, birth sibling, or other birth relative and does not wish to be contacted by a confidential intermediary except in the case of a medical need.
 - The adopted person consents to the release of identifying information to a confidential intermediary, a birth parent, birth sibling, or other birth relative.
 - The adopted person desires to be contacted by his or her birth parents, birth siblings, other birth relatives, or a confidential intermediary.
- An adopted person who files a certified statement may subsequently file another statement requesting to rescind or amend the prior statement.

Access to original birth certificate:

- A noncertified copy of the original birth certificate is available to the birth parent upon request.
- For adoptions finalized after October 1, 1993, a noncertified copy is available to the adopted person who is age 18 or older, unless the birth parent has filed an affidavit of nondisclosure.

Adoption Archives, Washington Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration

Contact Info Last Updated: 11-April-2011

Web Link:

<https://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/f2ws03apps/caofficespub/offices/general/OfficeShow.asp?qscity=1&CityName=Aberdeen>

Phone: (360) 537-4355

Fax: (360) 533-9567

Aberdeen WA 98520