



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.

Pennsylvania

Nonidentifying information may be released, upon request, to:

- The following persons may request information from the registry, the court that finalized the adoption, or the agency that coordinated the adoption:
 - An adopted person who is at least 18
 - An adoptive parent of an adopted person who is younger than 18, incapacitated, or deceased
 - A legal guardian of an adopted person who is younger than 18 or incapacitated.
 - A descendant of a deceased adopted person
 - The birth parent of an adopted person who is at least 21
 - A parent of a birth parent of an adopted person who is at least 21 if the birth parent consents or is incapacitated or deceased.
 - A birth sibling of an adopted person, if both the birth sibling and adopted person are at least 21, and:
 - The birth sibling remained in the custody of the birth parent and the birth parent consents or is deceased or incapacitated.
 - Both the birth sibling and adopted person were adopted out of the same birth family.
 - The birth sibling was not adopted out of the birth family and did not remain in the custody of the birth parent.
- A person listed above may request nonidentifying or identifying information about or contact with the following persons:
 - An adopted person who is age 21 or older
 - A birth parent of an adopted person
 - A parent of a birth parent of an adopted person who is age 21 or older, if the birth parent consents or is incapacitated or deceased
 - A birth sibling of an adopted person, if both the birth sibling and the adopted person are age 21 or older, and:
 - The birth sibling remained in custody of the birth parent and the birth parent consents or is deceased or incapacitated
 - Both the birth sibling and adopted person were adopted out of the same birth family
 - The birth sibling was not adopted out of the birth family and did not remain in the custody of the birth parent

Access to nonidentifying information is limited to:

- Nonidentifying information available to the registry shall be provided to the requester within 30 days of the request. Before the release of information, the

department shall remove any identifying information unless release has been authorized in writing by the subject of the information.

- When the court or agency receives a written request for nonidentifying information, it shall, within 30 days, notify the requester of its receipt of the request. The court or agency shall, within 120 days, review its records and furnish to the requester any information concerning the adoption that will not compromise the confidentiality of the relationship between the adopted person and the adopted person's birth parent.
- Medical and social history information may be filed with the court that terminated parental rights or finalized the adoption, the agency that coordinated the adoption, or the information registry.
- The following persons may at any time file, update, and request medical and social history information:
 - An adopted person who is age 18 or older
 - An adoptive parent of an adopted person who is younger than 18 or incapacitated.
 - A descendant of a deceased adopted person
 - A birth parent
 - A legal guardian of an incapacitated birth parent
 - A survivor of a deceased birth parent
- When the court or agency receives a written request for medical and social history information, it shall notify the requester within 120 days whether it possesses any medical and social history information related to the adoption.
- For nonidentifying information, the court or agency shall, within 120 days of location the information, review and furnish to the requester any medical and social history information that will not compromise confidentiality.
- If the requester is an adopted person seeking information about a birth parent who is deceased, any information on file regarding the deceased birth parent may be disclosed.

Mutual access to identifying information:

- The Department of Public Welfare shall establish a statewide confidential registry for the retention of medical and social history information for all adoptions finalized or registered in the State.
- For identifying information from the registry, if an authorization form is on file, the department shall notify the requester within 30 days whether information may be released. If there is no authorization on file, the department shall designate an authorized representative to use reasonable efforts to locate the subject of the request and obtain written authorization before any information is released.
- An authorization form allowing the release of identifying information may be withdrawn at any time by the person who signed the form
- The court or agency, within 120 days of receiving a written request for identifying information or contact, shall determine whether it has any records relating to the adopted person and conduct a good faith search for identifying information. A representative shall review the court and agency record for identifying

information regarding the birth or adoptive family and shall determine whether an authorization form has been filed.

- If the requester is an adopted person seeking the identity of a birth parent, the identity of and any information about a deceased birth parent may be disclosed. If the requester is an adopted person seeking the identity of both birth parents and only one birth parent agrees to the disclosure, only the information relating to that birth parent shall be disclosed.
- When the court or agency receives a written request for medical and social history information, it shall notify the requester within 120 days whether it possesses any information. For identifying information, if an authorization form is on file, the information will be released.

Access to original birth certificate:

- No disclosure shall be made regarding an adopted person's original birth record or regarding the documents or proof on which an amended certificate of birth is based or relating in any way to the birth parents unless the disclosure is made pursuant to the provisions of this section.
- The birth parents may, at the time of their parental rights are terminated or at any time thereafter, place on file with the court and the Department of Health a consent form granting permission for the court or the department to issue a copy of the summary of the adopted person's original birth record, disclosing the identity of the birth parents, at any time after the adopted person turns age 18, or if the adopted person is younger than age 18, to the adoptive parent or legal guardian.
- If only one birth parent has filed a consent, a copy of the summary of the original birth record naming only the consenting birth parent shall be issued.
- The consent of a birth parent may be withdrawn at any time by filing a withdrawal of consent form with the court and the Department of Health.

Adoption Medical History Registry, Pennsylvania Department of Health, Division of Vital Records

Contact Info Last Updated: 13-December-2010

Web Link: <http://www.health.state.pa.us/>

Harrisburg PA 17110

