



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 adopted person who is age 18 or older
- The licensed or authorized child-placing agencies providing services to the child.
- The adoptive parents
- Identifying information may be released to:
 - The adopted person who is age 21 or older
 - The birth parents
 - An adult birth sibling

Access to nonidentifying information is limited to:

- Nonidentifying information shall not be open to inspection, or be copied, by anyone other than those listed above, except upon the order of a circuit court upon good cause shown.

Mutual access to identifying information:

- For adoptions finalized on or after July 1, 1994, the following requests for disclosure of identifying information are permitted in the following circumstances:
 - The adopted person who is age 21 or older may apply for information about the birth family.
 - The birth parents and adult birth siblings may apply for information about the adopted person.
 - When the adopted person is under age 18, the adoptive parents or other legal custodian of the child may apply for information about the birth family.
- The Commissioner of Social Services shall designate the person or agency that made the investigation to attempt to locate and advise the person whose information is sought of the application.
- The designated person or agency shall report the results of the attempt to locate and advise the adopted person to the commissioner, including the effects that disclosure of the identifying information may have on the adopted person, the adoptive parents, and the birth family. The adopted person and the birth family may submit to the commissioner, and the commissioner shall consider, written comments stating the effect that the disclosure of identifying information may have upon any party.

- Upon a showing of good cause, the commissioner shall disclose the identifying information.
- When consent of the person being sought is not obtainable due to death or mental incapacity, the circuit court may release identifying information to the person making the request. In making this decision, the circuit court shall consider the needs and concerns of all persons involved.
- In parental placement adoptions, where the consent to the adoption was executed on or after July 1, 1994, the entire adoption record shall be open to the adoptive parents, the adopted person who is age 18 or older, and the birth parent that executed a written consent.

Access to original birth certificate:

- Upon receipt of notice of a decision or order granting an adult adopted person access to identifying information regarding his or her birth parents from the Commissioner of Social Services or a circuit court, and proof of identification and payment, the State Registrar shall mail an adult adopted person a copy of the original certificate of birth.

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Contact Info Last Updated: 11-May-2011

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