



## 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.

# TENNESSEE

## **Nonidentifying information may be released, upon request, to:**

- The adopted person who is age 18 or older
- The adoptive parents or guardian if the adopted person is under age 18.
- The birth parent or legal relatives
- The lineal descendants of an adopted person
- The legal representative of any of the above persons
- Identifying information is accessible to the following persons:
  - An adopted person who is age 21 or older
  - A birth parent or birth sibling
  - The spouse, lineal ancestor, or lineal descendant of an adopted person
  - The legal representative of any person listed above

## **Access to nonidentifying information is limited to:**

- Upon written request of a person listed above, the department shall release nonidentifying information about the adopted person and such person's birth or legal relatives that may include:
  - The date and time of the child's birth
  - The child's weight and other physical characteristics at birth
  - The nationality, ethnic background, race, and religious preference of the birth or legal relatives.
  - The educational level, general occupation, and any talents or hobbies of the birth or legal relatives.
  - A general physical description of the birth or legal relatives, including height, weight, color of hair, color of eyes, complexion, and other similar information.
  - Whether the birth or legal parent had any other children, and if so, any available nonidentifying information about such children.
  - Available health history of the adopted person and the person's birth or legal relatives, including specifically, any psychological or psychiatric information that would be expected to have any substantial effect on the adopted person's mental or physical health.
- The department shall provide the same information described above to prospective adoptive parents with respect to any child or children the prospective adoptive parents are seeking to adopt.

## **Mutual access to identifying information:**

- The department shall maintain a contact veto registry for permitting registration of the willingness or unwillingness of the persons listed above for contact with persons eligible to have access to records. The registry shall contain the following information:
  - The name of each person who has filed a contact veto or who has given consent for contact.
  - The address and telephone number of the person
  - The date and place of birth of the person, if known
  - Any persons whom the person who files a contact veto wishes to exclude from the application of the contact veto.
  - The name, address, and telephone number of the person requesting contact
  - The method of contact, if any, to which the person consents, including contact through one or more third parties.
  - Any other information that eligible parties wish to release to the other eligible parties.
- A person eligible to file a contact veto or give consent for contact may notify the department in writing that such person does or does not object to contact being made. With such person, by any person or group of persons who are eligible to establish contact.
- As part of the surrender for adoption, a birth parent or guardian shall indicate whether or not he or she wishes to file a contact veto or give consent for further contact. By filing a contact veto, a person is entitled to notification of any inquiry requesting contact with the filing person.

**Access to original birth certificate:**

- The original birth certificate is available to parties who have established their eligibility to have access to adoption records.

**Tennessee Department of Children's Services, Post Adoption Services**

Contact Info Last Updated: 27-April-2011

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