



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 birth parents
- A birth sibling who is age 18 or older

Access to nonidentifying information is limited to:

- The Department of Health shall operate an adoption information registry for the exchange of nonidentifying information between the persons listed above. Nonidentifying information shall include only the following information, if known, about the adopted person, birth parents, and birth siblings:
 - The age of the parents in years at the time of the child's birth
 - The heritage of the parents, including nationality, ethnic background, race, and religion.
 - Education completed by the parents at the time of the child's birth
 - General physical appearance of the parents at the time of the child's birth, including height, weight, color of hair, eyes, skin, and other information of similar nature.
 - The occupation of the parents
 - The health history of the parents
 - The talents, hobbies, and special interests of the parents
 - The facts and circumstances relating to the adoption
 - The existence of any known birth siblings
- Upon acceptance of a registration, the department shall search registry records to determine whether the adopted person's adoption occurred within the State. If the adoption did occur within the State, the department shall request nonidentifying information from court records. If the department determines that the adoption did not occur within the State, it shall notify the registrant that no record exists of the adoption occurring within the State.
- If an agency was involved in the adoption, nonidentifying information may be accessed by registering the mutual consent voluntary adoption registry maintained by the agency.

Mutual access to identifying information:

- The department shall operate an adoption information registry for the exchange of information among the persons listed above. Any person whose registration was accepted may withdraw the registration prior to the release of any identifying information.

- Upon acceptance of a registration, the department shall search the registry files to determine whether the person sought is register. If there is a match, the department shall notify the court to request the person's final consent to the release of identifying information.
- Upon receipt of a final consent by the adopted person, birth parent, and/or birth sibling, the department shall, unless the adopted person or birth sibling has elected otherwise, release-identifying information to all the registrants. Such identifying information shall be limited to the names and addresses of the registrants and shall not include any other information contained in the adoption or birth records.
- A mutual consent voluntary adoption registry may be maintained by each agency involved in an adoption. Persons eligible to receive identifying information may work through the agency involved in the adoption. The agency shall accept and maintain the registrations of an adopted person, the birth parents, or a birth sibling. If the agency determines that the agency was involved in the adoption, it shall transmit the registration to the adoption information registry operated by the department and release nonidentifying information.
- An adoption medical information subregistry shall be part of the registry. Access to all identifying records and information in the subregistry shall be subject to the same restrictions as the adoption information registry. The department shall establish procedures by which a birth parent may provide medical information to the subregistry, and by which an adopted person age 18 or older, or the adoptive parents of an adopted person who is under age 18, may access the medical information.

Access to original birth certificate:

- The original birth certificate is available only upon order of the court.

New York State Department of Health, Adoption Registry

Contact Info Last Updated: 14-April-2011

Web Link: <http://www.albanykids.com/>

Phone: (518) 447-5542

Albany NY 12207