



## 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.

# ALABAMA

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

- The adoptive parent
- The birth parents
- The adopted person who is age 19 and older
- Only the adult adopted person may access identifying information

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

- The health and medical history of birth parents and the adopted person
- General family background
- Physical descriptions
- The length of time the child was in out-of-home care other than with the adoptive parents
- The circumstances resulting in the adoption
- If the court finds that any person has a compelling need for nonidentifying information that can be obtained only through contact with the adopted person, the birth parents, or the adoptive parents:
  - The court shall direct the agency or a mutually agreed upon intermediary to establish contact with the adopted person, the birth parents, or the adoptive parents in order to obtain the information needed without disclosing identifying information.
  - The information then shall be filed with the court and released to the applicant at the discretion of the court. The identity and whereabouts of the person or persons contacted shall remain confidential.

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

- If either birth parent has given consent in writing to disclosure of identifying information, the State Department of Human Resources or a licensed child-placing agency shall release such identifying information.
- When an adopted person reaches age 19, he or she may petition the court for the disclosure of identifying information if the birth parent has not previously given consent.
  - The court shall direct an intermediary to contact the birth parents to determine if they will consent to the release of identifying information. If

the birth parent consent to the release of identifying information, the court shall so direct.

- If the birth parents are deceased, cannot be found, or do not consent, the court shall weight the interest and rights of all of the parties and determine if the identifying information should be released without the consent of the birth parents.

### **Access to original birth certificate:**

- Any person age 19 or older who was born in Alabama and who has had an original birth certificate removed from the files due to an adoption may, upon written request, receive a copy of that birth certificate and any evidence of the adoption held with the original record.
- A birth parent may at any time request from the State Registrar of Vital Statistics a contact preference form that shall accompany a birth certificate. The contact preference form shall indicate one of the following:
  - He or she would like to be contacted
  - He or she would prefer to be contacted only through an intermediary
  - He or she would prefer not to be contacted at this time, but may submit an updated contact preference at a later time
- A medical history form shall be supplied to the birth parent upon request of a contact preference form.
  - The medical history form and the contact preference form are confidential communications from the birth parent to the person named on the sealed birth certificate and shall be placed in a sealed envelope upon receipt from the birth parent.
  - The sealed envelope shall be released to a person requesting his or her own original birth certificate.

### **Alabama department of Human Resources**

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