



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.

MASSACHUSETTS

Nonidentifying information may be released, upon request, to:

- Nonidentifying information may be provided to:
 - The adopted person who is age 18 or older
 - The adoptive parents
 - The birth parents
- Identifying information may be released to:
 - The adopted person who is age 21 or older
 - The adoptive parents
 - The birth parents

Access to nonidentifying information is limited to:

- A placement agency that holds records relating to an adopted person, the birth parents, or the adoptive parents shall:
 - Release to the adopted person who is age 18 or older, upon his or her written request, information about his or her birth parents that does not identify the birth parents or their present or former locations.
 - Release to a birth parent of an adopted person, upon the birth parent's written request, information about the adopted person that does not reveal his or her identity after adoption or, his or her present or former locations.
 - Release to an adoptive parent, if the adopted person is under age 18, upon the adoptive parent's written request, information about the adopted person and the his or her birth parents that does not identify the birth parents or their present or former locations.
- The information shall include such nonidentifying information that the agency holds concerning the medical, ethnic, socioeconomic, and education circumstances of the person. The agency, in its discretion, shall further release such nonidentifying information concerning the circumstances under which the adopted person became available for adoption as it deems to be in the best interest of the person so requesting.

Mutual access to identifying information:

- If a placement agency has received written permission from the a birth parent to release the identity of the birth parent to the adopted person and the agency has received written permission from the adopted person, or written permission from the adoptive parents if the adopted person is under age 21, to release the identity after adoption of the adopted person to the birth parent, then the agency shall release the identity of the adopted person to the birth parent and the identity of the birth parent to the adopted person.

- The placement agency shall:
 - Release to the birth parent, upon the birth parent's written request, any personal data that it holds relating to the birth parent.
 - Release to an adoptive parent, upon his or her written request, any personal data that it holds relating to the adoptive parent.
- In making any disclosure of information, the agency shall remove personal identifiers relating to a third person. All other adoption records held by the placement agency shall be confidential and shall not be released.

Access to original birth certificate:

- All records concerning the adoption proceedings are available only upon court order.

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