



## 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:**

- An adopted person who is age 18 or older.
- An adoptive parent of an adopted person who is under age 18.
- An adoptive family member of a deceased adopted person
- A birth parent of an adopted person who is age 18 or older
- A birth sibling who is age 18 or older
- A birth family member if the birth parent is deceased
- Identifying information is accessible to:
  - An adopted person who is age 21 or older
  - An adoptive parent of an adopted person who is older than age 18 but younger than 21.
  - The birth parent or adult birth sibling

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

- An adopted person, an adoptive parent, or an adoptive family member may submit a written request to the agency or attorney who arranged the adoption or the probate court that finalized the adoption, for information about the adopted's birth parent or birth sibling contained in the agency's, attorney's, or court's adoption records that is nonidentifying information.
- A birth parent, birth sibling, or birth family member may submit a written request for information about the adopted person or adoptive parent that is nonidentifying information.
- The term 'nonidentifying information' means one of the following:
  - A birth parent's age at the time the child was adopted
  - The medical and genetic history of the birth parents
  - The age, sex, and medical and genetic history of an adopted person's birth siblings and extended family members
  - A person's heritage and ethnic background, educational level, general physical appearance, religion, occupation, and cause of death
  - Any information that may be included in a social and medical history as specified § 3107.09(B)-(C)
- In relation to an adoptive parent, any information that is not identifying information, including all of the following:
  - An adoptive parent's age at the time of adoption
  - An adoptive sibling's age at the time of adoption

- The heritage, ethnic background, religion, educational level, and occupation of the adoptive parent
- General information known about the well-being of the adopted person before and after the adoption

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

- For adoptions completed before January 1, 1964, adopted persons have access upon request to the adoption file maintained by the Department of Health.
- For adoptions completed between 1964 and 1996:
  - Any birth parent or sibling who wishes to authorize the release of identifying information shall file a release form with the department. A release may be filed with the department at any time. The department shall establish and maintain a file of release.
  - At age 21, an adopted person may file a petition with the Probate Court that finalized his or her adoption and inquire if such a form has been filed. In the event of a match, identifying information may be released to the adopted person.
  - The court that decreed the adoption may order that the contents be made open for inspection or available for copying.
- For adoptions completed after 1996:
  - A birth parent may file with the department a denial of release form that shall be placed in the adoption file. The birth parent may rescind an authorization of release form and rescind a denial of release form as many times as the birth parent wishes.
  - An adopted person age 21 or older, or an adoptive parent of an adopted person at least age 18 but under age 21, may submit a request to the Department of Health for a copy of the contents of the adopted person's adoption file. If there is not an effective denial of release form for either birth parent in the adopted person's adoption file, the department shall provide the adopted person or adoptive parent a copy of the contents of the adopted person's adoption file.

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

- Original birth records of persons whose adoptions were decreed prior to January 1, 1964, that are in the possession of the Department of Health shall be open to inspection by and either shall be copied or made available for copying by, the adopting parents, the adopted person, or any lineal descendant of the adopted person, upon request.
- For adoptions completed between 1964 and 1996, the original birth record and such papers shall not be open to inspection, be copied, or be available for copying, except as follows:

- The department shall copy and provide an agency with a copy of the original birth record upon the presentation by the agency of a certified copy of an order issued by a probate judge under § 3107.41.
  - The department shall inspect the file to determine the court involved in an adoption for the purpose of § 3107.09(D) or 3107.091 or provide the name of that court to an agency under the circumstances described in §3107.41(B)(2)(b).
  - The department shall provide an adopted person a copy of the contents of the adoption file pursuant to § 3107.38(B)(1).
  - The court that decreed the adoption may order that the contents be made open for inspection or available for copying.
- For adoptions completed after 1996, the department shall make the file's contents available to the adopted person or adoptive parent in accordance with § 3107.47.

**Ohio Adoption Registry, Ohio Department of Health – Vital Statistics**

Web Link: <http://www.odh.ohio.gov>

Phone: (614) 466-3543

Columbus OH 43215