



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.

TEXAS

Nonidentifying information may be released, upon request, to:

- The adoptive parents
- The adopted person who is age 18 or older
- Identifying information may be accessed by:
 - The adopted person who is age 18 or older
 - A birth parent
 - An alleged father who acknowledges paternity
 - A birth sibling who is age 18 or older

Access to nonidentifying information is limited to:

- The adoptive parents are entitled to receive copies of the records and other information relating to the history of the child maintained by the department, licensed child-placing agency, person, or entity placing the child for adoption.
- The adoptive parents and the adopted person, after the adopted person is an adult, are entitled to receive copies of the records that have been edited to protect the identity of the birth parents and any other person whose identity is confidential. As well as other information relating to the history of the child maintained by the department, licensed child-placing agency, person, or entity placing the child for adoption.
- At the time an adoption order is rendered, the court shall provide to the parents of adopted person information provided by the Bureau of Vital Statistics that describes the functions of the voluntary adoption registry.
- The licensed child-placing agency shall provide to each of the child's birth parents, as know to the agency, the information when the parent signs an affidavit of relinquishment of parental rights or affidavit of waiver of interest in a child.
 - The information shall include the right of the child or birth parent to refuse to participate in the registry.
 - If the adopted child is age 14 or older, the court shall provide the information to the child.

Mutual access to identifying information:

- The persons listed above may register with a mutual consent voluntary adoption registry.
- A registration remains in effect until the 99th anniversary of the date the registration is accepted, unless a shorter period is specified by the applicant or the registration is withdrawn. A registrant may withdraw his or her registration in writing at any time.

- The applicant must participate in counseling for not less than 1 hour with a social worker or mental health professional with expertise in postadoption counseling before the release of confidential information.
- The administrator shall process each registration in an attempt to match the adopted person, the birth parents, and the birth siblings.
- The administrator shall determine that there is a match if the adult adopted person and the birth mother, father, or sibling has registered.
- When a match has been made, the administrator shall mail a written notice to each registrant:
 - Informing the registrant that a match has been made
 - Reminding the registrant that he or she may withdraw the registration before disclosures are made, if desired.
 - Notifying the registrant that before any identifying disclosures are made, he or she must sign a written consent and participate in counseling.
- Identifying information about a registrant shall be released without the registrant's having consented to disclosure after the match if the registrant is dead, his or her registration was valid at the time of death, and he or she had in writing specifically authorized the post death disclosure.
- Identifying information about a deceased birth parent may not be released until each surviving child is an adult or until each child's surviving parent or guardian consents in writing to the disclosure.

Access to original birth certificate:

- Only the court that granted the adoption may grant access to the original birth certificate.

Central Adoption Registry, Texas Department of State Health Services – Vital Statistics

Contact Info Last Updated: 17-July-2013

Web Link: <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Application/TARE/Home.aspx/Default>

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