



# MOSAIC MEDICAL

Name Change Guidance  
for Pennsylvania Residents



## What Makes Your Name “Legal”?

Your legal name is the identity by which you are officially known.

Your birth name is a legal name because it is on your birth certificate and is used on all your legal documents.

## Have A Plan

Going through the process of changing your information can sometimes be stressful. You don't always know what to expect, or how you will be treated. It's important to have a plan to make this process go as smoothly as possible.

- **Know what is required to make the requested change.** You will need all the correct documentation to get the changes you are requesting. So make sure you have exactly what you need.
- **Bring a friend!** It is always great to have someone by your side. Try to bring along someone you trust, who can support and advocate for you.
- **Keep a positive attitude.** It may be hard if someone is being rude or even transphobic. If you feel unsafe find a way to exit the situation. The priority should always be your mental and physical well-being.
- **Stay Safe!** If you get upset, find a way to exit the situation. Always prioritize your safety and do what you can to minimize contact with the police and security.
- **Do something nice afterwards!** This is not always easy, treat yourself with kindness and find a way to engage in self-care!

## It's important to remember you have rights.

- If you are having a problem with a worker you are talking to, you can request to speak to their supervisor.
- We have included specific information about your rights in this process throughout this guide including complaint forms.





## What is involved with changing your name in Pennsylvania?

In Pennsylvania, filing a petition for a change of name involves:

- Going to court and filing a detailed petition.
- Submitting your fingerprints. Law enforcement will check for your official history and, if found, note the change of name in their records. We provide information on where to get this done locally.
- Publishing notice of your intention to change your name in two newspapers of general circulation in the county where you live. This publication requirement can be waived if it would jeopardize your safety or your child's safety. Documents to do this are provided from PA Trans Equity.
- Requesting a court hearing where a judge will consider your petition. The hearing should be held no sooner than one month out, but no later than three months out; and
- Submitting a records check indicating that there are no judgments, decrees, or other similar matters pending against you.

## Are there restrictions to changing your name in Pennsylvania?

Yes, there are some restrictions. You can't change your name to avoid creditors, judgments against you, or for any other fraudulent purposes. A judge can't grant a change of name to any person convicted of a felony until two calendar years after they have completed their sentence. Convictions for many of the most serious crimes (murder, sex assault, kidnapping, robbery) may render a person ineligible entirely. Recent court decisions have challenged some of these restrictions.

When all of the above has been completed, the court should change your name.



## Time & Cost

**Time:** Applying for a name change on your own will take time. It can take anywhere between 3-6 months, and there could be delays in the process.

**Cost:** There are fees involved with a name change. Changing your name can cost anywhere between \$50-\$600. It is possible for some of these fees to be waived and some costs may be higher.

### For financial assistance:

<https://www.patransequity.org/legal-name-change/name-change-assistance>

## Documents Needed

- Fingerprints
  - To find a fingerprinting location near you:  
<http://www.fingerprintint.com/pennsylvania>
- Birth Certificate
  - If you do have your birth certificate, you can get a copy from the local Department of Health where you were born.
- Social Security Card
  - If you do not have your Social Security Card, you can get another at your local social security office. You can locate your social security office:  
<https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/ic001.action#officeResults>
- Photo ID/License
- Petition forms
  - For legal documents, petitions, and the step by step process for your county, this link is the best place to start the process of starting your legal name change:  
<https://www.patransequity.org/download-legal-name-change-court-documents/>





## Hiring an Attorney

Hiring an attorney can make the whole experience less complicated, however attorney fees can be very expensive.

If you choose to hire an attorney, there are many options available and we encourage you to do your research prior to choosing an attorney. We do not recommend any specific attorneys, but the following might be good places to start:

- Giampolo Law Group:

<https://giampololaw.com/practice-areas/lgbtq-law/name-changes/>

- Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center Free Legal Clinic:

<https://www.bradburysullivancenter.org/legalclinic>

- BKW Family Law:

<https://bkwfamily.com/divorce/lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender/>

- Legal Services department at the Mazzoni Center in Philadelphia :

<https://www.mazzonicenter.org/supportive-services/legal-services/name-and-gender-marker-changes>

## Doing it Yourself

Here are some step-by-step guidelines to help you navigate the process.

**For a step by step guide to changing your name in Pennsylvania:**

<https://www.patransequity.org/legal-name-change/changing-your-name-in-pennsylvania/>

Eastern PA Trans Equity Project also **offers mentoring to explain the process to you.** To contact them about their mentoring or any other name changing services you can contact them here:

<https://www.patransequity.org/contact/>



## **We Are Here to Help**

We know this process can be difficult and feel daunting, Mosaic Medical Center is here to help you in any way we can. If you have questions or concerns throughout your process, give us a call and we will attempt to connect you to resources available to make this process as smooth as possible. You can call our Program Manager, Sarah Birch, at 267-403-1622.





## Filing the Appropriate Paperwork with Government Agencies

Once your new name is legal, get started on updating your official documents. If you live outside Pennsylvania you can go to <https://transequality.org/documents> for information about your state.

### Driver's License

You must go to the Pennsylvania DMV to update your driver's license with a name change.

**You will need your court decree or order reflecting your new name. The court will give you the papers you need to use.**

For more information:

<https://www.dmv.pa.gov/Driver-Services/Driver-Licensing/Pages/Change-Your-Name-or-Address.aspx>

If you would like to change your gender marker:

<https://www.dot.state.pa.us/Public/DVSPubsForms/BDL/BDL%20Form/DL-32.pdf>

If you believe you have experienced a discriminatory practice you may file a PA DOT Discrimination Complain Form:

<https://www.penndot.gov/about-us/EqualEmployment/Documents/EO-478%20Complaint%20Form.pdf>

### Birth Certificate

All states, including Pennsylvania, permit the name on a birth certificate to be changed following a court-ordered name change and will issue a new or amended birth certificate reflecting the new name. **You will need a copy of your ID with your legal name, so getting your driver's license changed first is necessary to change your name on your birth certificate.**

**As of 2016, the Pennsylvania Department of Health allows individuals to update the gender marker on their birth certificate at any time with a letter from a physician. We are happy to help with this process. You can call our offices or use Practice Fusion to ask our nurse practitioner Priyanka Jindal, CRNP to write your letter.**

**To apply for an amended birth certificate:**

- The birth certificate with the requested changes on the reverse side, or if you don't have the birth certificate complete a Correction Form with the requested changes listed. **You can use this form to change your gender marker and name. The directions on what to send with the form depending on what you are modifying are at the end of the form.**
- An Application for Certified Copy of Birth Record;
- A copy of your government-issued photo ID that verifies legal name and mailing address (listed gender does not matter), or two other forms of identification;
- A check or money order for \$20;
- A physician's statement on office letterhead saying that you have had appropriate clinical treatment for gender transition. Again, this is something we can help you with.





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## Social Security Card

After you have received your driver's license, let Social Security know so they can update your information, send you a corrected card, and make sure you get the benefits you have earned.

To change your name on your card, **you must show documents** proving your legal name change and identity.

To prove your legal name change, you must show your court order for name change.

To prove your identity, you must show an unexpired document showing your name, identifying information, and photograph, such as:

- U.S. driver's license
- State-issued non-driver's identification card
- U.S. passport

The form to apply for a social security card is located here:

<https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf>

It's important to know your rights when changing your social security card:

<https://transequality.org/know-your-rights/social-security>

Social Security employees are instructed to treat transgender customers with respect, including using appropriate pronouns, and to not ask unrelated personal questions. If you encounter difficulties, you may file a formal complaint of discrimination with SSA. The complaint form can be found at:

<http://www.ssa.gov/online/ssa-437.pdf>



## Passport

### Gender Marker

Under the current policy, you can obtain a full ten-year passport with an updated gender marker upon request by filling out an application form and indicating whether you would like your gender marker to read "M" or "F." As of October 2021, those are the only gender markers available on a U.S. passport. However, the State Department has indicated that it intends to expand these options to include an "X" marker in 2022.

You can get more information about changing your gender maker here:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/need-passport/selecting-your-gender-marker.html>

### Name Change

If you are applying to change your gender marker, submitting a passport application for the first time, or applying for a passport when your old passport has expired, you must apply in person.

You will need to complete and submit:

- Application for U.S. Passport (Form DS-11);
- Proof of U.S. Citizenship (such as a previous U.S. Passport, certified Birth Certificate, Certificate of Naturalization, or Report of Birth Abroad);
- Proof of Identity that contains your signature and photograph that is "a good likeness to you" (such as a previous U.S. Passport, a Driver's License, a Certificate of Naturalization, Military Identification, or a Government Employee Identification Card). You must present the original AND provide a photocopy of the front and back side with your application;
- A recent color photograph 2x2 inches in size;
- **If you are changing your name on your passport, an Order for Name Change (certified copy showing a seal and officiate/judge signature);**
- Fee (See Department of State Passport Fees for cost).

### Updating Your Legal Name Only (no gender marker update) on an Existing Valid Passport

When you already have a valid Passport, you may submit a Passport Renewal Application to change your legal name on the passport by mail. You will need to complete and submit:

1. A Passport Renewal Application (Form DS-82);
2. Your most recent Passport (book or card);
3. A recent color photograph 2x2 inches in size;
4. Order for Name Change (certified copy showing a seal and officiate/judge signature);
5. Fee (See Department of State Passport Fees for cost).





## Immigration Documents

### How do I update my immigration documents?

To update the name and/or gender marker on any immigration document you will need the following:

- If changing name, a court order for name change or other proof of legal name change.
- If changing gender, a driver's license, birth certificate, passport, court order, or other official government-issued document reflecting the requested gender designation, OR a letter from a licensed healthcare professional certifying the change in gender.

## Employment Authorization Card

To change the name and/or gender marker on an Employment Authorization Card, you must submit:

- Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization (<http://www.uscis.gov/i-765>)
- Filing fee of \$495 (subject to change) or a Fee Waiver
- Two passport-style photographs
- Supporting documentation
  - If changing name, a court order for name change or other proof of legal name change.
  - If changing gender, a birth certificate, passport, driver's license, court order, or other official government-issued documentation recognizing the new gender, OR a letter from a licensed health care provider certifying the change in gender.

## My Permanent Resident Card

To change the name and/or gender marker on a Permanent Resident Card, you must submit:

- Form I-90, Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card (<http://www.uscis.gov/i-90>)
- Filing fee of \$465 (subject to change) or a Fee Waiver
- Supporting documentation
  - If changing name, a court order for name change or, other proof of legal name change.
  - If changing gender, a birth certificate, passport, driver's license, court order, or other official government-issued documentation recognizing the new gender, OR a letter from a licensed health care provider certifying the gender change.

## My Naturalization Certificate

To change the name and/or gender marker on a naturalization certificate, you must submit:

- Form N-565, Application for Replacement Naturalization/Citizenship Document (<http://www.uscis.gov/n-565>)
- Filing fee of \$555 (subject to change) or a Fee Waiver
- Two passport-style photographs
- Supporting documentation
  - If changing name, a court order for name change, or other proof of legal name change.
  - If changing gender, a birth certificate, passport, driver's license, court order, or other official government-issued document recognizing the new gender, OR a letter from a licensed health care provider certifying the change in gender..