



MOSAIC MEDICAL

Name Change Guide
for Pennsylvania Residents

What Makes Your Name “Legal?”

Your legal name is the name you are officially recognized by. 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

Changing your information can be stressful, especially when the process is unfamiliar. Having a clear plan will help ensure a smoother experience.

- **Understand the requirements for making your requested changes.** Make sure you have all necessary documentation before proceeding.
- **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 afterward!** This is not always easy; treat yourself with kindness and find a way to engage in self-care!

Remember you have rights during this process.

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 PA, 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 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 by 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.
- Submit a records check confirming there are no pending judgments or similar matters against you.

Are there restrictions to changing your name?

There are restrictions on name changes. You cannot change your name to avoid creditors, judgments, or for fraudulent purposes. Individuals convicted of a felony must wait two years after completing their sentence before a judge can grant a name change.

Convictions for certain serious crimes may make you ineligible for a name change.

Once all requirements are met, the court should approve your name change.

Time and Cost

Time: The name change process typically takes three to six months, though delays are possible.

Cost: Fees for a name change range from \$50 to \$600. Some fees may be waived, while others may be higher depending on your circumstances.

For financial assistance:

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

Documents Needed

- **Fingerprints**
 - To find a fingerprinting location near you: <https://www.fingerprint.com/pennsylvania>
- **Birth Certificate**
 - If you don't 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>
- **Photo ID/License**
- **Petition Forms**
 - For legal documents, petitions, and the step-by-step process for your county, this is the best place to start: <https://www.patransequity.org/download-legal-name-change-court-documents/>

Hiring an Attorney

Hiring an attorney can simplify the process, but legal fees may be significant.

If you choose to hire an attorney, research your options carefully. While we do not endorse specific attorneys, the following may be helpful starting points:

- [Giampolo Law Group](#)
- [BKW Family Law](#)

Doing It Yourself

The following step-by-step guidelines can help you navigate the process:

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

We Are Here To Help.

We understand this process can be challenging. Mosaic is here to support you. If you have questions or concerns, please contact us.

Updating Official Paperwork

Driver's License

To update your driver's license, visit the PA DMV with your court order reflecting your new name. **The court will provide the necessary documents.**

For more information: <https://www.pa.gov/services/dmv/change-a-driver-license-name-or-address>

To change your gender marker:

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dmv/driver-services/licenses-and-photo-ids/gender-designation-options>

Birth Certificate

All states, including PA, allow you to update your birth certificate after a court-ordered name change. You must first update your license or ID to reflect your new name before requesting a new birth certificate.

As of 2016, the Department of Health allows you to update your gender marker on your birth certificate at any time with a letter from your provider. You may contact our office to request this letter.

To apply for an amended birth certificate:

- The birth certificate with the requested changes on the reverse side or a correction form
- An application for a certified copy of birth record
- A copy of your license/ID
- A check or money order
- A physician's statement on letterhead.

Social Security Card

After updating your driver's license, notify Social Security so they can update your records and issue a corrected card.

To change your name on your card, you must provide documents that show 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 or state-issued ID
- 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/documents/know-your-rights-social-security>.

Currently, it is possible to change your name on your Social Security card, but you are not able to change your sex assigned at birth. This does not affect your Social Security benefits.

If you encounter any difficulties with Social Security, you may file a complaint of discrimination. The complaint form can be found here:

<https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-437.pdf>

Passport

Under current policy, new and renewed U.S. passports are required to list an “M” or “F” gender marker matching the applicant’s biological sex assigned at birth. The “X” gender marker is no longer available. Previously issued passports with “X” or gender-affirming markers remain valid until their expiration date.

Name Change on Passport

If you are submitting your 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
- Proof of identity that contains your signature and photograph.
- A recent color photograph 2x2 inches in size
- **Your Order for Name Change (certified copy showing a seal and officiant/judge signature)**

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 need to complete and submit:

- A Passport Renewal Application (Form DS-82)
- Your most recent passport (book or card)
- A recent color photograph 2x2 inches
- **Your Order for Name Change (certified copy showing a seal and officiant/judge signature)**

Immigration Documents

Under current policy, all immigration documents are required to list an “M” or “F” gender marker matching the applicant’s biological sex assigned at birth. The “X” gender marker is no longer available. It is expected that all previously issued documents with “X” or gender-affirming markers remain valid until their expiration date.

Employment Authorization Card

To change the name on an Employment Authorization Card, you will need the following:

- Form I-765 Application for Employment Authorization (<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>)
- Filing fee
- Two passport-style photographs
- A court order for name change

Permanent Resident Card

To change the name on a Permanent Resident Card, you will need the following:

- Form I-90 (<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>)
- Filing Fee
- A court order for name change

Naturalization Certificate

To change the name on a naturalization certificate, you will need the following:

- Form N-565 (<https://www.uscis.gov/n-565>)
- Filing Fee
- Two passport-style photographs
- A court order for name change