

Name change guide

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Learn how to get a legal name change. Use this if you need a name change for any reason including safety, religion, sex, gender identity, transgender status, immigration status, marital status or other reasons. There are 2 kinds of name changes in Washington — sealed name changes and name changes that are not sealed. This guide has instructions for both kinds and forms for a sealed name change.

1. Common questions

How do I change my name?

There are 4 ways to change your name in Washington state:

- By court order
- Through marriage, divorce or adoption
- By common law (This method may not be recognized by everyone and may not be considered a “legal” name change.)
- By amending a minor child's birth certificate (This is only for children born in Washington.)

This guide explains how to change your name by **court order**. In most situations, it's a simple process you can do by yourself, without a lawyer.

You might also be able to change your name during your citizenship naturalization process. You should talk to your immigration lawyer if you want to try to get a name change that way.

How do I change my name using a marriage, divorce or adoption?

You can change parts of your name during the regular processes of marriage, divorce or adoption.

- **Marriage:** You might only be able to change your last name if using a marriage to do so. If you want to change your first and middle name, you may still need to complete a court ordered name change. Use the final official marriage license as proof of your legal last name change.
- **Divorce:** You can change **your** name during any kind of divorce. You can ask to change your first, middle and last name during a divorce. There is a section for requesting name changes on the standard Washington state court form for divorce: [data-entity-type="media" data-entity-uuid="f0e8d885-4206-42f7-8093-2ff76cd630ae" data-entity-substitution="media" title="Petition for Divorce \(Dissolution\)">FL Divorce 201 \(Petition for Divorce\)](#)

You **can't** use divorce or parentage cases to change a child's name **unless** there is domestic violence and the judge allows you to combine it into 1 case and 1 order. This is uncommon and usually involves a lawyer. Read Chapter 5 to learn more about how to deal with this.

- **Adoption:** Courts generally allow name change requests in adoptions as a normal part of the adoption case. You don't need to file a separate case. You can ask to change first, middle and last names during an adoption.

Who can get a court-ordered legal name change?

In Washington, you can ask the court to legally change your name if you're an adult or an emancipated minor. A court-appointed guardian can ask the court to change the name of the adult they have guardianship over. A parent or court-appointed guardian can ask the court to change a minor child's name, although the court will usually require notice to any other parent or guardian.

If I change my name by court order, will it be confidential (“sealed”)?

Not unless you file a special type of case to make it confidential (“sealed”). Sealed name changes in Washington are more private than non-sealed name changes. The record of your name change will be kept as confidential as possible if you ask for a sealed name change.

Name changes **don’t** have to be published in the newspaper in Washington.

2. The 2 types of legal name changes

There are **2 kinds** of name change court processes in Washington. Each type of name change has its own forms, requirements and specific court. Non-sealed name changes are **available to anyone**. Sealed name changes are **only** available to certain people **if** they have a specific situation.

(**)**You can only file for a **sealed** name change if **at least one of these is true**:

- Your request is due to an experience (or reasonable fear) of domestic violence, stalking, unlawful harassment, or coercive control.
- Your request is related to gender expression or identity.
- You are an emancipated minor.
- You have asylum, refugee, or special immigrant juvenile status.

If one of those situations **does** apply to you, you can use the forms in this guide to file for a **sealed** name change **in Superior Court**. You might also need extra forms that are specific to the court you choose like a Confidential Information Sheet or Notice of Hearing. When you file you should ask the Superior Court Clerk if you need any additional forms.

If **none of the sealing eligibility situations apply to you**, you must file your petition **in District Court** and should use the name change forms provided by that court. You can find these on many District Courts’ websites or by going into the District Court’s Clerks office.

You can't request a **sealed** name change and **must** file in District Court if you are required to register as a **sex offender** or are **involved with the Department of Corrections** in any way (incarcerated, on probation, parole, or post-prison supervision). You must notify the authorities before and after your name change hearing.

Non-sealed name changes:

You file these in a District Court. Most name changes are this type of “non-sealed” or “public” name change. These name changes will be part of regular accessible District Court records. Whether these records are online and how they are made available to the public varies by county. The Court may keep some kind of record of your name change that could be found by the general public. The District Court typically forwards the Name Change Order to the county auditor where it is recorded as a public record.

For non-sealed name changes, there will be other people in the room during your hearing. Usually, they'll be other people asking for name changes like you are.

For a non-sealed name change, you must use the name change forms provided by the District Court. **Don't use the forms in this guide for a non-sealed name change.**

Sealed name changes:

You file these in Superior Court. If you qualify, you can file for a **sealed** name change. This means the court record will be private or confidential. But having the record sealed **doesn't** mean that the record goes away **entirely**. It just makes it **as confidential as is possible** in court records systems.

Sealed name changes require special steps to prove who you are each time you need a copy of your court order. It makes it so that no one can access the court order or record unless they are listed by name on the order. Once sealed, there's no **public** access to any court record of the name change filing. Even if the court doesn't approve your name change request, the record of your request will remain sealed.

If you get a sealed name change, it will take longer when you get an ID.

Important notice about sealed name changes and special DOL process: If you are granted a **sealed** name change court order, you will have a very specific process you must go through when you try to update your Washington state ID or driver's license with the Department of Licensing (DOL). You must have an interview to give your information to a special DOL staff person. You will have special rules to follow about how you can submit your information to ask for a new ID each time you need one.

It is important to consider these extra processes before you decide to get a sealed name change. If you already got a sealed name change court order, prepare for a longer than usual wait for the replacement when you update your license. And prepare for the extra process you must go through with the DOL that includes the special interview with the special DOL unit.

If you got a sealed name change:

- Don't email the sealed order information to the DOL or otherwise **submit it in any way** that could be a public record. This can affect your privacy protections.
- **Changing or replacing your license will take longer than it did before.**
- Getting an ID will take longer if you have never had one with Washington DOL before.
- It might involve a different office than your normal local DOL office.
- You might be contacted by a special DOL unit for an interview.
- The interview is the way that you will share your information with the DOL so it can go into the DOL record. **This interview helps prevent your personal sealed information from becoming accessible in Public Record Act requests.**

All these extra steps are to keep your information confidential and **to try to keep you safe.**

Juvenile and emancipation cases have their own process:

If there's already an open juvenile or emancipation case, the **juvenile court** will decide to do one of these:

- Hear the sealed name change request itself
- Let you file the sealed name change for the minor in a different Superior Court

3. Filing

Do I have to file in the county where I live?

No. The law changed (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=4.24.130>) in 2023 to allow you to file in any court in Washington for either a non-sealed or a sealed name change. But **which** type of court you use depends on your situation.

For a non-sealed name change, use a District Court. For a sealed name change, use a Superior Court.

- You **can** file in the county where you live, but you **don't have to**.
- You **don't** have to prove you live in the county that you file in, but you'll probably have to show some kind of ID when you file. If you are houseless, don't have an address, or don't have a photo ID, the clerk should tell you what other proof you can use to show that you are who say you are for the purposes of a name change.
- You **will** have to attend a hearing in the county where you file. It might be a video hearing where you can attend remotely. But, you could be required to attend a hearing in person at the courthouse. It depends on the county. Ask the clerk.

You can search for District and Superior Courts in the Court Directory on the Washington Courts' website. (https://www.courts.wa.gov/court_dir/)

How much does it cost?

Costs vary per county and will depend on which kind of name change you get.

If you're filing a **non-sealed name change**, check the petition instruction form from the **District Court**. The filing fee is usually listed in the instructions. There

might also be an auditor's fee for recording the name change.

If you're filing a **sealed name change**, you can call the **Superior Court** clerk and ask what the filing fee is for a general civil case in that county. It is usually around \$260.

For both types of name changes and in any county, **you'll also need money for buying certified copies** of your final order on the day of your hearing. Get many copies — a typical adult needs at least 7 certified copies to update most government IDs. Certified copies are usually around \$5 per copy. Try to plan for an extra \$40 or more for certified copies on the day of your hearing.

If you can't afford the fees, you can ask the court for a fee waiver. If you qualify for a filing fee waiver, the court must also order the county auditor to waive all recording fees related to your name change.

4. The hearing

Do I need to go to a court hearing? What happens at the hearing?

Yes. All name change petitions require a court hearing that you must attend. Some courts let you attend online. Others require you to come in person.

Name change hearings are usually quick and easy. The judge calls your name when it is your turn and asks you a few questions. The judge will ask if everything in the petition is true and correct. They'll also ask if you're trying to change your name for fraudulent purposes or if you're trying to avoid debts.

What do I do after the hearing?

Immediately after your hearing ends **before** you leave the courthouse, go to the Clerk and buy multiple certified copies of your Name Change Order. You'll usually need at least 7 copies.

Always keep at least 1 certified paper copy of your Name Change Order for your records.

Send copies of the signed Name Change Order to all institutions, agencies, accounts or persons needing proof of the name change.

After a legal name change you should update your name with the Social Security Administration **first**. Then change your other IDs.

For any other IDs and accounts, you should ask the agency or institution what form to use to update your information after a legal name change.

Be sure to update all your accounts including your state ID, Social Security card, tribal ID, bank accounts, deeds, voter registration, vehicle titles and registration, insurance, retirement accounts, school transcripts and any other relevant record. If you own anything with a title in your name like a car or a house, you need to change your name on the title.

For “real” property (like a home or land you own), you need to change your deed to reflect your legal name change **as soon as you can** after you are granted a court ordered name change. Use a Quit Claim Deed to grant the property to yourself as your new name. To do this, fill in the Quit Claim Deed using your old name as the grantor and your new name as the grantee. Record your Quit Claim Deed with the county recording office where your property is located.

5. Minor name changes

Can I change my minor child’s name using a birth certificate instead of a court order?

Maybe. If you’re a parent of a child who is still under 18 **and** who was born in Washington state, you might be able to get a name change for your child through a birth certificate change. This is a way to change your child’s **first and middle name** without a court order.

It is often cheaper than getting a court ordered name change for your child. If all the parents agree, you can change the first and middle name of your minor child **once** through a birth certificate “amendment”.

There are requirements:

- All parents listed on the birth certificate must sign the Affidavit for Correction form.
- You can't use this process to change a child's name if the child's name was already changed once through any kind of court order, adoption, paternity or other legal name change process.
- If one parent is deceased, you must submit a death certificate
- You can read more about how to ask for this kind of birth certificate amendment name change at the Department of Health's page about [Changing Birth Certificates \(https://doh.wa.gov/licenses-permits-and-certificates/vital-records/how-correct-record/changing-birth-certificates\)](https://doh.wa.gov/licenses-permits-and-certificates/vital-records/how-correct-record/changing-birth-certificates).

Otherwise, you can ask a court for a court ordered name change for a minor child.

Can I get a court-ordered name change for a minor?

Maybe. If you're the only legal parent (or court-appointed guardian), or if both parents agree and sign the petition, the court will likely approve the child's name change. Minor name change rules and forms **can be different** than adult ones.

If you want to get a non-sealed minor name change, get the forms from the **District Court** for the county where you want to file. Each county has its own forms for requesting a minor name change. These forms often include instructions about what that county will require for a minor name change. The form instructions might also tell you **what kind of notice** that county requires if you need to notify an opposing parent. You'll usually be required to give some kind of notice to any other parents or guardians.

If you want to get a sealed minor name change, file in a **Superior Court** and you can use [the forms in this guide](#). Even for a sealed name change, you generally must give notice of some kind to an opposing parent or guardian.

What if the other parent doesn't agree with our child's name change?

When one parent doesn't agree, it's called a "contested" minor name change. You can still ask to change your child's name even if the other parent contests.

Generally, you must notify the other parent and schedule a hearing where a judge will decide. Both parents can attend the hearing and state their position. The other parent **can** challenge the proposed name change. This can

get complicated. Try to get legal help.

If there is an active custody case or parenting plan, follow the parenting plan or talk to your lawyer before filing for a name change for your child. You can ask for sole decision-making authority over the child's name as part of your parenting plan case.

If you can't notify the other parent because it wouldn't be safe for you or the child, you can ask the court for permission **not** to notify. You must prove why notice shouldn't be required. The judge might require you to use notice by publication instead.

If you can't notify the other parent because you don't know where they are and truly can't find them, you can ask the judge for permission to notify them by mail at a last known address or by publication. This means you might be able to publish the notice in a local newspaper instead of sending the notice directly to the other parent. You must prove you made a good effort to find them before you can use notice by publication.

What do judges consider when parents disagree about the child's name?

- The child's wishes. (Depending on the child's age and maturity, the child may be able to speak to the judge.)
- The effect of the change of the child's name on the child's relationship with each parent.
- How long has the child had a given name.
- Any difficulties, harassment, or embarrassment the child may experience from having the present or proposed name.
- Some counties require that minors 13 and up must consent to the name change.
- If local rules require it, a judge will decide a minor name change based on the child's best interests.

For a transgender child, when one parent doesn't support a gender related name change, it can be helpful to get a declaration from a supportive health care provider.

6. Name change issues for specific communities

I am a court-appointed guardian, can I get a name change for the person I am guardian of?

Yes. The law changed in 2023 to allow court-appointed guardians to petition for a name change for the person they have guardianship of. You can file for a public name change in District Court, or for a sealed name in Superior Court if the situation meets the requirements for sealing.

Can I change my name on my Consular Report of Birth Abroad birth record?

Yes, most likely. If you are allowed to do so, you must get a court-ordered name change. Then follow the instructions from the State Department (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/replace-certify-docs/requesting-a-record/replace-amend-CRBA.html>) for sending in a certified copy of the order with a notarized statement asking for the amended record.

If you're worried about the risks of changing your name on your Consular Report of Birth Abroad birth record because your name change is related to a sex or gender change, you should try to get legal help. You can contact the non-emergency Legal Help Desk (<https://lambdalegal.org/helpdesk/>) at Lambda Legal (<https://lambdalegal.org/>) to see if they have updated information about the risks of the January 2025 federal bans. The State Department will no longer issue sex changes to any Consular Report of Birth Abroad record but they **should still** issue name changes for those records according to their normal rules.

Can I change my name on my immigration or citizenship documents and records?

Yes, most likely. If you are allowed to do so, you must get a court-ordered name change.

If you aren't a citizen, you should talk to your immigration attorney **before** you try to get a legal name change in court. If you don't have an immigration attorney, you can try to find one (<https://ailalawyer.com/>). If you can't afford an immigration

attorney, you might be able to get help from the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (<https://www.nwirp.org/get-help/>). If you aren't a citizen, tell your attorney if you've received a legal name change since filing for your immigrant status.

If you got a legal name change after you were granted a Certificate of Naturalization, use a Form N-565 (<https://www.uscis.gov/n-565>) to request a replacement certificate with your changed name. You must have proof (<https://www.uscis.gov/policy-manual/volume-12-part-k-chapter-4>) of your legal name change. USCIS has more information about changing your name on secure identity immigration documents (<https://www.uscis.gov/policy-manual/volume-11-part-a-chapter-2>).

If you are worried about the risks of changing your name on your immigration or citizenship documents because your name change is related to a sex or gender change, you should try to get legal help. Talk to your immigration attorney if you have one. You might be able to get help from the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (<https://www.nwirp.org/get-help/>). You can also try to contact the non-emergency Legal Help Desk (<https://lambdalegal.org/helpdesk/>) at Lambda Legal (<https://lambdalegal.org/>) to see if they have updated information about the risks of the 2025 federal bans.

Is it safe for transgender people to change their name on their passport or Social Security records now?

You can still change your name on your Social Security record and passport. There **is** a current federal ban on changing the sex or gender on federal records that currently impacts your Social Security records. The ACLU's lawsuit about the passport ban **got back the right to change passports** as of June 18, 2025 through a temporary preliminary injunction.

Can I get a name change if I am under DOC jurisdiction?

You can still ask to change your name, but **you must file in District Court** and you'll have extra notice requirements (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=4.24.130>). **You can't request a sealed name change.**

You must follow the special requirements for asking for a name change (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=4.24.130>) if you are under Department of Corrections jurisdiction because you are:

- Currently incarcerated
- On probation
- On parole
- Under post-prison supervision

You must do these things in this order when you ask for a name change:

1. Give the Department of Corrections (DOC) written notice of the hearing time and date along with copies of your petition. These must be received **5 days before** the hearing about your name change.
2. If your name change is granted, you must also give a copy of the Order Changing Name to DOC **within 5 days** of getting the order. It is a misdemeanor to fail to do these things.

Ask your parole or probation officer whom you should send the notice to.

You can also ask the prison records officer if you are currently living in prison.

If you are a convicted sex offender or kidnapper, other rules and restrictions will apply. You can read these rules and restrictions at RCW 4.24.130(3) (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=4.24.130>) and RCW 9A.44.130(7) (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=9A.44.130>). You must give additional notice to Washington State Patrol. Try to get legal help.

If you are currently incarcerated in a DOC prison in Washington, you will need to work with the Legal Liaison at your local facility to coordinate how you can participate in your hearing. Different counties have different procedures for managing name change petitions from people who are incarcerated. Disability Rights Washington (DRW) can help you navigate the extra requirements for changing your name while incarcerated in a Washington State Prison (<https://disabilityrightswa.org/publications/changing-your-name-while-incarcerated-in-a-washington-state-prison/>). DRW provides information about the specific name change procedures required by the different prisons (<https://disabilityrightswa.org/publications/changing-your-name-while-incarcerated-in-a-washington-state-prison/print/>) in Washington.

What if I'm in local jail and want to petition for a name change?

You should be able to request a name change petition form from the county jail in which you're being held. You may need help from a support person who isn't in jail to be able to complete and file the petition in the court itself. Some county District Courts will be able to process name changes for people being held in jail in their county and will work with the jail to make sure you can attend your name change hearing if required. **Some county District Courts won't be able to do so.**

You are not required to file a name change petition in the county in which you are currently incarcerated, so if you experience challenges accessing the process with your local District Court, you may be able to file your petition by mail with another District Court that can handle your case remotely. If you need help, you should talk to a lawyer.

What if I also want to change the gender designation on all my IDs?

Each ID type and agency that issues IDs has its own process and rules for changing the sex or gender that is on its record. For transgender and gender diverse people, there can be various possible consequences of changing (or not changing) your sex or gender on different IDs.

Important Notice: During the current federal administration, the information related to federal ID rights and sex/gender on federal records is changing rapidly. An executive order issued in 2025 temporarily banned sex or gender changes on federal identity records and documents. This included passports, Social Security records, tribal and BIA related records, immigration records and other federal records. These bans are being challenged by lawsuits.

As of January 2026 you can't change the sex or gender designation that is listed on your passport or other federal IDs. If you ask to change your passport, no matter what proof you provide, you could be issued a passport with the sex that was assigned on your original birth certificate.

7. Updating IDs after a name change

Each type of ID or account will have specific processes and forms for updating your name on its records after a name change.

Update your name with the Social Security Administration first! Then change your other IDs.

- **For your Social Security Card:** Change Name with Social Security (<https://www.ssa.gov/personal-record/change-name>)
- **For your WA state ID or driver's license:** Change Your Name or Address On Your Driver's License (<https://www.dol.wa.gov/driver-licenses-and-permits/update-driver-license-information/change-your-name-or-address-your-driver-license>)
- **For your Washington state birth certificate:** Court-Ordered Name Change (<https://doh.wa.gov/licenses-permits-and-certificates/vital-records/court-ordered-name-change>)
- **If you were born in another state:** Contact your birth state's vital statistics agency to find out the correct process.
- **For any Tribal IDs:** Usually your Tribal enrollment or records office will have a specific form you must complete to update your BIA records and your tribal ID card. Also make sure your name is updated on any Indian Money Account records and tribal trust property information.
- **For Passports and Passport cards:** Change or Correct a Passport (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/have-passport/change-correct.html>)
- **For immigration documents:** Talk to your immigration attorney or learn more about which form applies to your situation (<https://www.uscis.gov/tools/uscis-tools-and-resources/information-about-your-immigration-document/updating-or-correcting-your-documents#:~:text=If%20you%20would%20like%20to,or%20other%20vital%20document%20>)
- **For deeds:** Update your name on all your deeds. Talk to your local county recorder's office in the county in which you own the property.

For any other IDs and accounts, you should ask the agency what form to use to update your information after a legal name change. **Be sure to update all your accounts** including your bank accounts, deeds, voter registration, vehicle titles and registration, insurance, school transcripts and any other important record.

What do I do about legal documents that have my old name like a parenting plan or divorce order?

Whether you **can** change the document will depend on the **type** of document. Generally, try to redo the document with your new name if you can. Otherwise, you **will** have to show your name change order to prove who you are **every** time you use the legal document.

You **can** redo new versions of these documents with your new name. Just make sure you also have the new versions notarized or witnessed if it is required:

- A Will
- A Power of Attorney
- A Healthcare Directive
- A Supported Decision-Making Agreement
- A Living Together Contract
- Other contracts that didn't require a judge signature or court case, as long as the other party will agree to redo the contract and re-sign.

You probably **can't change** these types of documents if they are already finalized. You will need to show a copy of your name change order whenever you need to use any of these legal documents:

- A divorce order.
- A marriage certificate.
- Any documents from a closed court case.
- Any already filed court papers in an open case including the case names.
- Any document or court order signed by a judge or court.
- Parenting plans that are a court order or are formalized as part of a court case. If you make your own **informal** parenting plan, you can redo it as long as the other parent agrees to and will re-sign.

If you need to travel with your child after your name change, try to use a temporary Power of Attorney (POA) form for the travel period instead of carrying your parenting plan to prove custody. The POA form can be

easily changed and canceled, so you can make a new one using your new name. If you have to use a parenting plan that has your old name to travel or cross borders, you will have to show your name change order to prove who you are if you have updated your photo ID.

8. Step-by-step for Sealed Name Changes

1. Fill out the Petition

For a **non-sealed** name change for an adult or a minor, file in a **District Court**. Contact the court clerk to get their local name change forms. **Don't use the forms in this packet.** Most counties have their District Court name change forms available online.

For a **sealed** name change for an adult or a minor, file in a **Superior Court**. You can use the forms in this packet. You can also check with the court clerk to see if they have their own name change forms. If local forms exist, use them.

Type or print clearly, in black ink. Be sure to format and fill out the forms correctly.

Once you have completely filled in the Petition, sign and date it before filing it with the court.

If you use these forms, you are asking for a sealed name change.

2. Gather your proof

Sealed name changes have special rules. You must provide proof that you meet one of these situations to be eligible for a sealed name change:

- For Domestic violence, attach evidence to your petition that shows you've experienced (or have a reasonable fear of) domestic violence, stalking, unlawful harassment, or coercive control. **Examples:** a copy of your protection order or criminal no contact order. Copies of threatening messages. Statements (declarations) from others who have witnessed the abuse or threats.
- For gender expression or identity, your statement that you are changing your name for a gender identity related reason is enough. You **don't** have to show any other proof. This is called "self-attestation" and the court should accept it.
- For an emancipated minor, show a copy of your emancipation order.
- For an asylum, refugee, or special immigrant juvenile status, bring the immigration paperwork that shows your status.

If you're asking on behalf of a minor, or someone you have guardianship of, be prepared to show proof that you are the parent or court-appointed guardian. This could be a birth certificate or court order **and** your ID.

If you are asking to change a minor child's name and the other parent doesn't agree, you must provide proof of why the name change is in the child's best interest. This could include written statements (declarations) from you or others, including the child's medical provider or other professionals.

3. **Get together your filing fee or filing fee waiver**

Unless you are using a fee waiver, it is best to pay the filing fee with cash. If you pay with card or check, there could be a delay in getting a hearing date set. The clerk may wait until the payment posts before assigning you a file number.

If you can't afford the fees, you can ask the court for a Fee Waiver. Give these forms to the Clerk at the same time you file your Petition.

4. **File your Petition with the Court Clerk in a Superior Court**

The Petition form in this guide is for a **sealed** name change, which **must** be filed in a Superior Court. You can choose **which county's** Superior Court is best for your situation.

Ask the Clerk if the court you are using requires a Confidential Information Sheet or Notice of Hearing form for a sealed name change petition. If they're required, you should ask for copies of those forms and complete them according to the form instructions. Ask the clerk if any other additional forms are required.

Take your filing fee (or waiver form) and your petition (and any extra required local forms) to the Court Clerk's office and give the Clerk your paperwork. The Clerk will take your payment or your filing fee waiver form and then will tell you the next steps. The Clerk might have you fill out additional paperwork like a case cover sheet or case type sheet.

When you submit a Motion and Declaration for Fee Waiver, the clerk may tell you that you don't qualify for a filing fee or recording fee waiver. You can ask the judge to waive **both** the filing and the recording fees. **Only a judge can decide if you must pay the fees.** If a clerk asks you to pay it, but you believe you are eligible for a fee waiver, say, "I would like to take that issue in front of the judge." If the clerk still won't let you file, get legal help.

Once your payment posts or your fee waiver is approved, you will be assigned a case number and told how to schedule a hearing date. **Pay attention to the Clerk's instructions about the next steps.** In some counties, the clerk will schedule the hearing for you. In others, you may have to schedule the hearing yourself, using information from the clerk about when a judge will be available.

Ask the clerk if you can attend the hearing online, or if you must come in person. Get more information about how to attend like:

- Where to get the link for the online courtroom
- What physical courtroom the hearing will be in
- How long the hearings usually take in case you have to take off work, pay for parking or get a sitter

5. If changing a minor child's name, serve the other parent

In most cases, if you are asking the court to change a minor child's name, you must have someone else serve a copy of the paperwork on the other parent (or any other court-appointed guardian) at least **2 weeks** before the hearing date.

The paperwork must include a copy of the Petition for Name Change, Notice of Hearing, and any other evidence you are asking the court to consider. Your server must be at least 18 years old and willing to sign a **Proof of Service** form showing when and how they delivered the paperwork.

You can skip this step if:

- Both parents (or court-appointed guardians) signed the petition, findings and proposed order for name change.
- You can prove that you are the child's only parent or court-appointed guardian. **Example:** The other parent died. You have a copy of their death certificate.

6. Attend the hearing

You must be present at the hearing. It should be a private hearing since it is for a sealed name change. The judge might ask you some questions about debt, fraud or trying to use a name change to avoid obligations like child support. If the judge grants your sealed name change, on the day of the hearing you'll be given a final order that reflects your new name.

If you're asking to change a **minor child's** name and the other parent doesn't agree, the judge will ask questions about this. Unless you are asking the court **not** to require notice, bring your Proof of Service. Be prepared to explain why the name change is in the child's best interest. The judge may delay the hearing to require notice or give the other parent time to respond. If the other parent is there, the judge will let them state their position.

7. Get plenty of certified copies of the final order if granted

Each certified copy will cost \$5. It is best to get as many as 10 copies to start with on the day of your hearing. **It can be difficult to get more certified copies later because your case will be sealed.** You must prove your identity each time you need to buy more certified copies so getting more to begin with is helpful.

Most people will need at least **7 copies** to change all the IDs and records they will need to update. You must give a certified copy of your name change order to every agency or account you are changing your name with. You won't get those copies returned to you. And you'll need to keep at least one hardcopy for your records.

9. Forms for a Sealed Name Change

For a **non-sealed** name change, file in a **District Court**. Contact the court clerk to get their local name change forms. **Don't use the forms in this packet.** Most counties have their District Court name change forms available online.

For a **sealed** name change, file in a **Superior Court**. If local forms don't exist for the county you plan to file in, **you can use the forms in this packet.**

Form attached:

Petition for Sealed Name Change (NJP License 410)

Form attached:

Findings for Sealed Name Change (NJP License 411)

Form attached:

Order for Sealed Name Change (NJP License 412)

Follow the [general rules to format and fill out court documents](#).

Tips for filling out the Petition for Sealed Name Change (NJP License 410)

Fill out the **petition** form to explain what you want the judge to do and why they should do it.

Make sure to choose the right situation for why you're eligible for a sealed name change.

Check the spelling of all your names. If there is a mistake in your final legal name change order because of a mistake in your petition, it can be hard to fix.

Tips for filling out the Findings for Sealed Name Change (NJP License 411)

Fill out the findings form the way you want the judge to sign it. This is a proposed findings form you'll ask the judge to sign at the hearing. If you're not sure about something in the findings, leave it blank for the judge to complete.

Tips for filling out the Order for Sealed Name Change (NJP License 412)

Fill out the **order** form the way you want the judge to sign it. This is a **proposed order** you'll ask the judge to sign at the hearing. If you're not sure about something in the order, leave it blank for the judge to complete.

Be sure your all your names are exact to both your current legal name and the new one you are requesting. If there is a mistake in your name change order, you might have to get another name change to fix it.

WashingtonLawHelp.org gives general information. It is not legal advice. Find organizations that provide free legal help on our Get legal help page.

Superior Court of Washington, County of _____

In re:

(Current name)

by parents or legal guardians on behalf of
a minor:

(Name/s of parents or legal guardians)

No. _____

Petition for Sealed Name Change

(No mandatory form)

Clerk's action required: Do not file in a
public access file (RCW 4.24.130(5)(c))

Petition for Sealed Name Change

Instructions

Step 1: Find out if you are eligible for a **sealed** name change in Superior Court.

You can only file for a sealed name change in Superior Court **if at least one of these is true:**

- Your request is due to an experience of or reasonable fear of domestic violence, stalking, unlawful harassment, or coercive control.
- Your request is related to gender expression or identity.
- You are an emancipated minor.
- You have asylum, refugee, or special immigrant juvenile status.

If none of those apply, do **not** use this form. Contact **District Court** for their public name change forms.

Step 2: Check with the Superior Court Clerk to see if they have their own name change forms. If local forms exist, use them. Otherwise, fill out this form and proposed *Findings for Sealed Name Change* (NJP License 411) and *Order for Sealed Name Change* (NJP License 412). You may need additional forms like a Cover Sheet, Confidential Information Sheet or Notice of Hearing form. Ask the Clerk if these forms are required in your county and how to get them, if needed.

Step 3: File your petition with the court clerk. Pay the filing fee or apply for a fee waiver. Ask the court clerk how to schedule a hearing on your petition.

Step 4: Go to your court hearing. Bring ID and your proposed *Findings* and *Order for Sealed Name Change* (forms NJP License 411 and 412). Ask the judge to sign your Findings and Order. After the Order is signed, you can purchase copies from the court clerk. Purchase many.

1. Who is changing their name?

Me. I am (*check one*):

age 18 or older. My date of birth is: _____.

an emancipated minor.

A minor child, age _____. I/we have the legal authority to file this petition for the child because (*check one*):

We are the child's parents or legal guardians. Both parents or guardians agree to the name change and are signing this petition.

I am a parent or legal guardian of the child and (*check one*):

The child has no other parent or legal guardian.

The child's only other parent or legal guardian has died.

I will have a copy of this petition and the notice of hearing served on the child's other parent or legal guardian.

I ask the court to change my child's name without requiring notice to the other parent or legal guardian because (*explain legal or safety reasons*):

The requested name change is in the child's best interest because: _____

2. Request

I ask for a court order changing my the minor child's name:

From (*current full legal name*):

First

Middle

Last

To: (new full legal name):

First

Middle

Last

3. Washington court's authority (jurisdiction)

- I am a resident of Washington.
- The minor child is a resident of Washington.
- Not** a resident. The person whose name is changing is not a resident of Washington. I am filing this petition in a Washington state court because (*explain*):

4. Reasons to seal: Are you filing this petition for any of the reasons listed below?
If Yes, you may file in Superior Court. The Superior Court will seal the file to protect your privacy if the petition is granted. RCW 4.24.130.

- Yes, this is due to an experience of (or reasonable fear of) domestic violence, stalking, unlawful harassment, or coercive control as defined in RCW 7.105.010.
- Yes, this is related to gender expression or identity as defined in RCW 49.60.040.
- Yes, I am an emancipated minor under chapter 13.64 RCW.
- Yes, I (or the minor child) have received asylum, refugee, or special immigrant juvenile status.
- No. (*Do not use this form. You can file a petition for a public name change in District Court. Use the District Court's name change form.*)

5. Is the person whose name is changing required to register as a sex offender?

- No
- Yes (*Do not use this form. You can file a petition for a public name change in District Court. You will have special notice requirements. Use the District Court's name change form.*)

6. Is the person whose name is changing under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections?

- No
- Yes (*Do not use this form. You can file a petition for a public name change in District Court. You will have special notice requirements. Use the District Court's name change form.*)

7. Has the person whose name is changing had a previous name change?

- No
- Yes. *Explain:* _____

8. Are you filing this petition to avoid creditors?

- No
- Yes

9. Are you filing this petition for any illegal or fraudulent purpose?

- No
- Yes

10. Is there anything else the court should know about your request for a name change?

- No.
- Yes. *Explain:* _____

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the state of Washington that the facts I have provided on this form are true.

Signed at (*city and state*): _____ Date: _____

▶ _____
Petitioner's or Parent/Guardian's Signature *Print name*

▶ _____
Second Parent/Guardian's Signature (if any) *Print name*

▶ _____
Minor child age 13 or older (if any) *Print name*

Superior Court of Washington, County of _____

In re:

No. _____

(Current name)

Findings for Sealed Name Change

by parents or legal guardians on behalf of
a minor:

(No mandatory form)

(Name/s of parents or legal guardians)

Findings for Sealed Name Change

Use this form with the Petition for Sealed Name Change, NJP License 410, and Order for Sealed Name Change, NJP License 412.

1. A petition for name change was filed to change the name of:

- an adult, age 18 or older.
- an emancipated minor.
- A minor child, age _____.

A hearing was held on (date): _____

The following people attended: _____

2. Washington court's authority (jurisdiction)

This court has jurisdiction over the requested name change because:

- The person whose name is being changed is a resident of Washington.
- Other reason (explain): _____

3. Findings on reasons to seal

The petition for name change should be granted in Superior Court and the case sealed pursuant to RCW 4.24.130(5) because *(check all that apply)*:

- The request is due to an experience of (or reasonable fear of) domestic violence, stalking, unlawful harassment, or coercive control as defined in RCW 7.105.010.
- The request is related to gender expression or identity as defined in RCW 49.60.040.
- Petitioner is an emancipated minor under chapter 13.64 RCW.
- Petitioner (or the minor child) has received asylum, refugee, or special immigrant juvenile status.

4. Sex offender and DOC findings

(Name change petitions for people who are required to register as a sex offender and for people who are under DOC jurisdiction must be filed in District Court.)

The person whose name is changing is **not** required to register as a sex offender and is **not** under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections (DOC).

5. Minor child findings

- Does not apply.
- Petitioner/s have the legal authority to petition for the minor child because:
 - They are the child's parents or court-appointed guardians. Both parents or guardians agree to the name change.
 - Petitioner is a parent or court-appointed guardian of the child and *(check one)*:
 - The child has no other parent or court-appointed guardian.
 - The child's only other parent or court-appointed guardian has died.
 - The child's other parent or court-appointed guardian was served notice of this hearing and had an opportunity to respond.
 - The court should grant a name change without notice to the other parent or court-appointed guardian because *(explain legal or safety reasons)*:

- The requested name change is in the child's best interest because: _____

6. Conclusion

The petition should be granted. The court should enter an Order for Sealed Name Change as requested.

Dated _____

Judge/Court Commissioner

Print Judge/Court Commissioner Name

Presented by:

▶ _____
Petitioner's or Parent/Guardian's Signature *Print name*

▶ _____
Second Parent/Guardian's Signature (if any) *Print name*

▶ _____
Minor child age 13 or older (if any) *Print name*

Superior Court of Washington, County of _____

In re:

No. _____

(Current name)

Order for Sealed Name Change

[] by parents or legal guardians on behalf of
a minor:

(No mandatory form)

(Name/s of parents or legal guardians)

Clerk's action required: 3

Order for Sealed Name Change

Use this form with the Petition for Sealed Name Change, NJP License 410, and Findings for Sealed Name Change, NJP License 411.

1. Basis

The court entered Findings for Sealed Name Change on (date): _____.
Based on those findings, the court issues this order.

2. Order

The petition is granted. The court orders the following name change:

From (current full legal name):

First

Middle

Last

To: (new full legal name):

First

Middle

Last

3. Clerk's action

The clerk shall **seal** this file. There shall be no public access to any court record of this name change filing, proceeding, or order. The name change file shall not be open to inspection except:

- Upon order of the court for good cause shown; or
- Upon the request of the person whose name change was granted or the person's guardian or representative.

Ordered.

Dated _____

Judge/Court Commissioner

Print Judge/Court Commissioner Name

Presented by:



Petitioner's or Parent/Guardian's Signature

Print name



Second Parent/Guardian's Signature (if any)

Print name



Minor child age 13 or older (if any)

Print name