General

Michigan's adoption law requires adoption agencies, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and courts to release certain information from adoption records to adult adoptees, former family members and adoptive parents of a minor child. The law divides the information in adoption records into two categories: non-identifying and identifying information.

Non-Identifying Information

The agency or court having the adoption record must release the following information concerning the adoptee and the adoptee's family of origin within 63 days if available:

- Date, time and place of birth of the adoptee including the hospital, city, county and state.
- An account of the health, psychological and genetic history of the adoptee.
- An account of the health, psychological and genetic history of biological parents and siblings.
- Description of the adoptee and the adoptee's birth family including:
  - Given first name of adoptee at birth.
  - Age and sex of sibling(s) of adoptee.
  - Adoptee's enrollment and performance in school, educational testing results and special education needs.
  - Adoptee's racial, ethnic and religious background.
  - General description of birth parents, including age at termination of parental rights and length of time parents had been married at time of placement.
  - Account of adoptee's past and existing relationship with any individual or facility with which the adoptee had lived or visited on a regular basis.
  - Educational, occupational, professional, athletic or artistic achievement of the birth family.
  - Hobbies, special interests and school activities of the birth family.
- Circumstances of any court order terminating parental rights of birth parent.
- Length of time between termination of parental rights and child's placement.
- Status of termination: voluntary or court-ordered.
- Any information necessary to determine child's eligibility for state or federal benefits.

Identifying Information

Identifying information is defined as:

- Name of child before placement in adoption.
- Name of each biological parent at the time of termination of parental rights.
- Most recent name and address of each biological parent.
- Names of biological siblings at the time of termination.

Release of Information to Adult Adopted Person

You may request information from the agency that placed you, the department or the court that finalized your adoption. You must submit a signed written request for identifying/non-identifying information along with a copy of your photo identification.

Release of identifying information to an adult adoptee is different depending on when parental rights were terminated:

On or after May 28, 1945, but before September 12, 1980.

You can obtain your name, the names of biological siblings at the time of termination and identifying information on both birth parents **if** both parents have filed statements of consent to release identifying information in the Central Adoption Registry.

You can obtain your name, the names of biological siblings at the time of termination and identifying information on one birth parent **if** that parent has filed a statement of consent in Central Adoption Registry.

You can obtain your name, the names of biological siblings at the time of termination and the name of a birth parent **who is deceased**:

Before May 28, 1945 or on or after September 12, 1980.

You can obtain your name and the names of biological siblings at the time of termination **if** a birth parent has not filed a statement of denial with Central Adoption Registry.

You can obtain identifying information on any birth parent who **has not filed** a statement of denial with Central Adoption Registry.

Release of Information to Former Parent or to an Adult Former Sibling

Non-identifying information may be released by the court that finalized the adoption, the department and the placing agency upon written request and a copy of the photo identification, providing the adoptee is an adult. The name and address of an adult adoptee may be released by an adoption agency or court to a biological parent or an adult sibling if the adoptee has authorized the release in writing to the court and/or agency. The former parent(s) and adult former sibling may register statements of consent or denial with Central Adoption Registry.

Central Adoption Registry

The Central Adoption Registry is a file kept by MDHHS of former parents and former adult siblings' statements consenting to or denying the release of identifying information. These statements will be forwarded to adoption agencies and courts upon request so they can determine what type of information can be released to an adult adoptee. **The registry is accessed by the court or agency only.**

A former parent may consent to or deny the release of his/her name and address by submitting a Parent's Consent/Denial Statement (DHS-1919) to Central Adoption Registry. A former adult sibling may register with Central Adoption Registry by completing the Adult Former Sibling Statement (DHS-1917).

One may revoke or update his/her information by completing a new form and submitting it to the registry. A statement of denial is not effective after the death of a former parent.

Forms are available from the courts, MDHHS local offices, adoption agencies, the registry, or by downloading from the website listed.

The address of the registry is:

Michigan Department of Health
and Human Services
Central Adoption Registry
Grand Tower Suite 514
PO Box 30037
Lansing, MI 48909

Release of Information to Adoptive Parents

Non-identifying information contained in adoption records must be given to adoptive parents of a minor child at the time of placement and upon request thereafter.

Locating an Adoption Record

All adoptions have a court record and may also have an agency record. There is no one central location of adoption records.

The court record of adoption is usually located in the family division of circuit court located in the county where the adoptive parents lived when the adoption took place.

A court, upon receiving a request for information from an adoption record in its possession from an adult adoptee, former parent or adult former sibling, must identify the placing agency. An agency receiving a request for information from an adoption record in its possession must identify the court that finalized the adoption.

The adult adoptee may make a written request to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Vital Records, Lansing, MI 48909 to request the name of the court that finalized the adoption.

Confidential Intermediary Program

The Confidential Intermediary Program is available through the court where the final order of adoption was entered. This program allows for search and contact by eligible individuals. Individuals (meeting certain timeframes) who may petition the court for an intermediary are:

- An adult adoptee, adoptive parent of a minor child or an adult child of a deceased adoptee seeking contact with and/or information about a former family member.
- A former family member, which includes biological parent, birth grandparent or adult birth sibling, seeking contact and/or information with an adult adoptee or an adult child of a deceased adoptee.

A confidential intermediary shall make a reasonable search for an individual whose identity is sought by a petitioner. Fees are generally charged for this service. For more information, contact the family division of circuit court where the adoption was finalized.

Added Features of the Adoption Law

A petition to gain access to adoption records may be filed with the court that finalized the adoption. Such a petition may be advisable if the information sought cannot be obtained any other way.

The direct descendant of the deceased adoptee is eligible for the same information as the adoptee with the exception of a copy of the original certificate of live birth.

The law applies to all adoptions, including relative and stepparent adoptions.

A court, adoption agency or MDHHS may charge $60 or the actual cost of releasing information, whichever is less. Part or the entire fee may be waived in case of indigence or hardship.

In some instances, an adult adopted person may obtain a copy of his/her original certificate of live birth from MDHHS:

- For adoptions where parental rights were terminated prior to May 28, 1945, and after September 12, 1980, and no parental denial statement is on file with the registry.
- The adult adoptee may make a written request to Vital Records to obtain the name of the court that finalized the adoption. Visit www.michigan.gov/vitalrecords to contact them.

To learn more, visit the Records section of our website:

www.michigan.gov/adoption

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) does not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, religion, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, genetic information, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political beliefs or disability.

DHS Pub 439 (Rev. 8-15) Previous edition obsolete.

Release of Information From Michigan's Adoption Records

MDHHS
Michigan Department of Health & Human Services