

## Adoption

### **How can I obtain a copy of my original birth certificate if I have been adopted?**

When the adoption is placed on file with the Office of Vital Statistics and Registry, the original birth certificate and all documents related to the adoption are placed under seal. This seal can only be broken by court order.

## Birth Records

### **Where do I request a birth certificate if I was born abroad, with US citizenship at birth?**

Contact the State Department in Washington DC at (202) 955-0307.

### **How do I know if the copy of my birth certificate is acceptable for the Division of Motor Vehicles, Passport or for proof of age or citizenship?**

Your record must be issued by the local office of vital records where the birth occurred or the Office of Vital Statistics and Registry and must contain a raised seal. Some entities require the document to have been issued within the last two years. Complimentary copies issued by a hospital are not valid.

### **Is a raised seal required to make a certified copy of a birth certificate official?**

Yes, within the State of New Jersey certified copies are required to contain the raised seal of the issuing authority, either the local office of vital records or the Office of Vital Statistics and Registry.

### **Can I obtain the time of birth?**

Yes. In order to obtain this information you must purchase a certified copy of your record. The time will be included on the birth certificate only if the doctor recorded it. You should indicate on your request that you wish the certified copy to show the time of birth.

### **Can I request the birth record of a non-family member?**

Yes, but you will receive a certification rather than a certified copy. A certification is a non-certified document, which contains limited information and states it is for informational purposes only, not for identification or legal purposes.

### **How long after a birth occurs is it filed with the Office of Vital Statistics and Registry?**

Under our current system, births are filed within three weeks of the completion of the certificate by the hospital.

## Civil Union Records

### **Where do I apply for my civil union license?**

The application must be filed in the New Jersey municipality in which either applicant resides and the license is valid throughout the State. If neither applicant is a New Jersey resident, the application must be filed in the municipality where the ceremony will occur.

### **If I am in a domestic partnership and want to enter into a civil union with the same partner, do we need to terminate the domestic partnership before applying for a civil union license?**

No. Domestic partners who wish to enter into a civil union with the same partner do not need to terminate their domestic partnership. Once they have entered into the civil union, their domestic partnership automatically terminates, if it was originally registered in New Jersey. If it was registered outside New Jersey, the laws of that state would determine the validity of the domestic partnership.

### **If I was previously registered in a domestic partnership and neglected to legally terminate it when we ended our relationship, must I terminate that domestic partnership before I enter into a civil union with someone else?**

Yes. If the domestic partnership with a different partner was not legally terminated, or was not terminated by the death of the previous partner, you must terminate the domestic partnership before entering into a civil union with someone else.

### **Is my civil union registered in another state recognized by the State of New Jersey?**

If your civil union meets the requirements of the state in which you registered, then it is recognized by the State of New Jersey.

### **Am I required to enter into a civil union in New Jersey if I am already in a civil union or same-sex marriage in another state or country?**

No. You are not required to enter into a civil union in New Jersey. If your civil union or same-sex marriage meets the requirements of the state or country in which you registered, then it is recognized by the State of New Jersey as a civil union. However, if you wish, you may also elect to enter into a civil union in New Jersey. In that case, you would file for a Reaffirmation of Civil Union License in New Jersey.

### **After filing the civil union application, is there a waiting period before the civil union license can be issued?**

Yes. There is a 72-hour waiting period before the license can be issued. The waiting period begins once the application has been filed by one or both applicants. A Superior Court judge can waive all or part of the 72-hour waiting period.

**After filing a Reaffirmation of Civil Union application, is there a waiting period before the Reaffirmation of Civil Union License can be issued?**

No. For a Reaffirmation of Civil Union License, there is no waiting period, The license can be issued immediately after the complete application has been filed.

**Can Internet ministers perform my civil union ceremony?**

Yes. It is recommended you check the Internet website for the particular Internet ministry to verify that their ministers are authorized to perform civil union ceremonies.

**Are public officials who are authorized to perform marriages/civil unions required to perform my civil union ceremony?**

Public officials who are authorized to perform marriages are authorized to perform civil unions. Public officials may choose whether or not to exercise this authority. However, if a public official agrees to perform marriages, he or she must agree to perform civil unions. If an official elects not to perform civil unions, he or she cannot perform marriages either. Public officials do have the right to exercise their authority only for residents of their municipality.

**Are members of the clergy required to perform my civil union ceremony?**

No. Members of the clergy are not covered by the Law Against Discrimination and have the right to decline to perform civil unions.

**Am I eligible to assume my partner's name or hyphenate our last names following our civil union?**

Yes. However, please note that the federal government does not recognize civil unions. You may choose to consult an attorney to legally establish a name change.

**Do applicants for a civil union license have the right to create their own vows or make changes to existing vows that may be in place with public officials?**

Yes. You can create or edit vows. In your vows, you may refer to each other using any terms you prefer, including wife, spouse, lover, or life mate, and you may refer to the ceremony as a marriage. However, when the ceremony is completed, you are legally entered into a civil union and considered a civil union couple.

## Death Records

**If a resident of New Jersey dies in another state or country, is the death certificate on file in New Jersey?**

No, you must contact the state or country in which the death occurred.

**How do I find a cemetery plot or burial place?**

Request a long form copy of the death certificate, which will have the burial location. Then you can contact that entity for more information.

## Domestic Partnership Records

**I entered into a domestic partnership before New Jersey's Civil Union Act took effect. Is my domestic partnership still valid if we elect not to enter into a civil union?**

Yes. Your domestic partnership is still valid as it was entered into under the law in place at the time. However, you continue to have only the rights afforded to domestic partners and not the full rights of married couples as are given to civil union couples.

**Is my domestic partner able to assume my last name after we register our partnership?**

No. There is no basis to recognize the assumption of the partner's last name. A legal name change must be filed with the courts and an original copy of the final judgment presented to the Office of Vital Statistics and Registry.

**Is it true that as of February 19, 2007, when New Jersey's Civil Union Act took effect, only same-sex or opposite-sex couples 62 years of age or older can register domestic partnerships?**

Yes. As of February 19, 2007, domestic partnerships can only be established by couples 62 years of age or older, regardless of whether they are a same-sex or opposite-sex couple.

## General Information

### **Can a person eligible to receive a certified copy of a vital record designate someone to collect the certified copies for them?**

An individual who has filed a complete application for a copy of a vital record can authorize another person to pick up the record on his or her behalf. To do so, the applicant should sign a notarized letter, stating the name of the person listed on the vital record and the name of the individual who is picking up the record. The individual picking up the record must present this letter along with [Acceptable Forms of Identification](#).

### **Does an ex-spouse have access to the previous spouse's birth or death certificate?**

An ex-spouse can only obtain birth or death records if the records are being obtained on behalf of a minor child that was the product of the marriage. Documentary proof of the minor child and the need for the certificate must be provided.

### **Do stepparents have the same access to records as parents?**

Stepparents can only obtain a certified copy of the birth certificate of a stepchild with the authorization of the biological parent, unless the stepparent has adopted the child or has been granted custody of the child.

### **Does an attorney have access to vital records?**

An attorney can only obtain records on behalf of a client. The attorney must show proof of being the legal representative of the client and may only obtain the same type of copy of a vital record that the client is eligible to receive. An attorney is not granted certified copies of vital records solely on the basis of being an attorney; he or she must meet the requirements of [Executive Order 18](#).

### **Do foreign governments accept a birth or death record issued by the Office of Vital Statistics and Registry?**

Yes. However, if the foreign country is a member of the Hague Treaty, the record must also contain an Apostille Seal. You can contact the consulate of that country to determine if it is a member of the Hague Treaty or obtain other specific requirements.

### **How do I obtain a record with an Apostille Seal?**

You must purchase a copy of your vital record from the Office of Vital Statistics and Registry and indicate on your application that it is needed for Apostille Seal. You will receive a certified copy, which contains the original signature of the State Registrar or Assistant State Registrar. You must forward this certificate to the [Department of Treasury](#) requesting an Apostille Seal.

### **Can vital records be faxed?**

No. Vital records require the raised seal of the local office of vital records or the Office of Vital Statistics and Registry seal to be considered valid. It is the administrative policy of the State Registrar that records are not faxed for any reason.

## **Marriage Records**

### **Is my marriage on file in New Jersey if I was married in another state or country?**

No. You must contact the state or country in which you were married.

### **Who can perform marriages in New Jersey?**

Judges of the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Third District, federal district court judges, U.S. magistrate, judge of a municipal court, judge of the Superior Court, judge of a tax court, retired judge of the Superior Court or Tax Court, the former County Court, the former County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, or the former County District Court who has resigned in good standing, surrogate of any county, county clerk, any mayor or the deputy mayor when authorized by the mayor, or chairman of any township committee or village president of this State and ministers of every religion may marry individuals legally permitted to marry.

## **Ordering Vital Records**

### **What can I do if I do not have all of the information required for a non-genealogical application (exact date the event occurred, exact municipality where the event occurred and/or mother's maiden name, etc.)?**

In order to be processed your application **must** contain all required items. To find the required information, you may wish to check census records, newspaper archives at the local library, the federal social security death index or hire an investigator. If after exhausting all alternatives you are still unable to supply the required items you will need to obtain a court order directing the Office of Vital Statistics and Registry to issue the copy.

### **Is the fee for a New Jersey birth record waived for military personnel?**

No.