

YOUR GUIDE TO LEGALLY CHANGING YOUR NAME (FOR LGBTQIA+)



GETTING STARTED

Before diving into the detailed steps, it's important to understand that legally changing your name is a significant milestone for many LGBTQIA+ individuals. It's about aligning your identity with how you actually see yourself. While the process can be a hassle, it is so worth it in the end, especially for those looking to reinforce affirmation or reduce feelings of gender dysphoria.

In most cases, you'll need a court order before you can update your ID and other official records. Since every state has its own rules, this guide lays out the basics to help you get started.

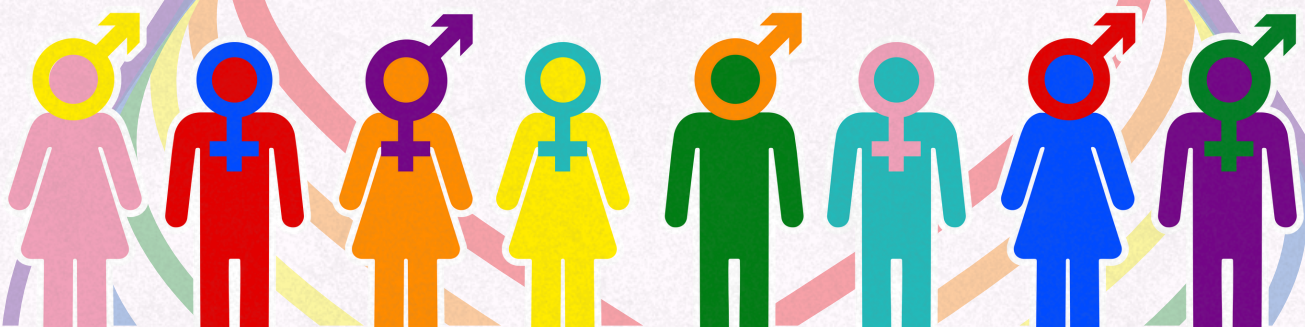


THE NAME CHANGE PROCESS

This isn't a quick one-and-done situation. Depending on where you live, it can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months. Costs vary too. Expect to pay between \$150 and \$500, though some states offer fee waivers if money's tight.

A lot of trans people choose names that match their gender identity. Some ask family members what they would've been named if they were assigned a different gender at birth, while others pick a name with personal meaning.

Legally, you can change your name to almost anything, but there are a few exceptions. You can't change your name to dodge debt, escape criminal charges, or commit fraud. Some states make things easier for trans folks by allowing them to change their name and gender marker at the same time. In some cases, they can even skip outdated steps like newspaper publication.



FOR THOSE IN ARIZONA

In Arizona, adults must submit their name change application to the Superior Court in the county where they reside. The process requires:

1. Completing a Civil Cover Sheet (checking box 152 for "Change of Name")
2. Filing an Application for Change of Name for an Adult
3. Making two photocopies of your application
4. Submitting these documents in person at a Superior Court location
5. Paying the required filing fee (with fee waivers potentially available)
6. Scheduling a hearing with Court Administration
7. In some cases, publishing a notice in a newspaper if required by the court. However, publication may be waived in situations involving safety concerns, such as domestic violence or stalking.

READ MORE

Name Change Process:

<https://www.arizonanamechangelaw.com/requirements>

How to Schedule a Hearing with Court Administration:

<https://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/ezcourtforms/packets/namechange.aspx?packetGuid=7a79ac79-df0b-4f5d-aa8d-381f70b94981>

CHANGING YOUR NAME AS A MINOR

If you're under 18, you usually can't file a name change on your own. A parent or legal guardian has to do it for you. Courts decide based on the "best interests of the child," which means they'll consider things like:

- Your preference (especially if you're older)
- How long you've been using your chosen name
- Whether your birth name causes distress or embarrassment

Both parents typically have to agree, but state laws differ. If your parents are divorced or separated, the court may require notifying both of them. Even if one parent objects, that doesn't necessarily mean the request will be denied. If you can prove that the change supports your well-being, the court may still approve it.



WHAT ABOUT TRANS YOUTH?

For trans minors, some states have made the process faster and simpler, particularly if they're also updating their gender marker. Judges are becoming more aware of how crucial name changes are for trans youth, recognizing that affirming someone's identity can improve mental health and overall well-being.

Some judges may ask about medical treatment or a formal diagnosis before approving the change, but no state legally requires medical intervention. A letter from a therapist or mental health provider can be helpful, but it's not always needed. Instead, focus on how the name change benefits your mental health, social life, and identity.

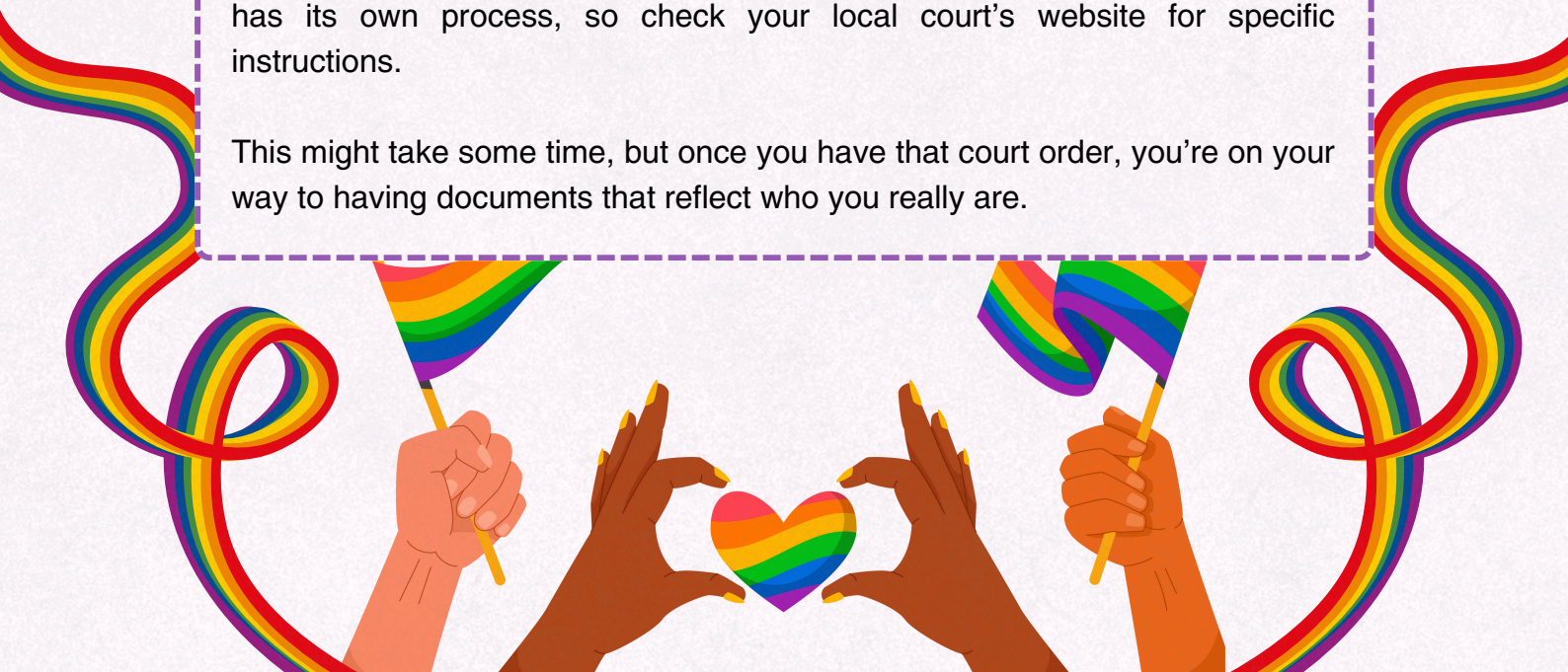
LEGAL PROTECTIONS & PRIVACY

Good news. Privacy protections have improved in recent years. In 2021, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that name change records for trans individuals should be kept private. Many states have also gotten rid of newspaper publication requirements but for Arizona, specifically, the publication requirement is somewhat unclear. The court "may give notice to interested parties if deemed necessary," except in circumstances where there is a protective order in place or if the applicant is a victim of a stalking offense. In other words, while publication may be required in some cases, there are exceptions, particularly for safety concerns.

CHECK FIRST IF YOU NEED A COURT ORDER!

The most important step is getting a court order, which is the official document that allows you to update your ID and other records. Each state has its own process, so check your local court's website for specific instructions.

This might take some time, but once you have that court order, you're on your way to having documents that reflect who you really are.



CLAIMING YOUR NAME: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

STAY ORGANIZED

Keeping track of your name change process can feel overwhelming, but a checklist can help. Remember, this is a marathon, not a sprint. It may take months to update all your documents and records.

Step 1: Complete and File Court Documents

- Find the right forms for your state and county (available on your state court's website or at the courthouse).
- Fill out required forms, which usually include:
 - A petition for name change (includes your current and new name plus your reason for the change)
 - A proposed order for the judge to sign
 - Additional state- or county-specific forms
- Gather supporting documents:
 - A copy of your ID (driver's license, state ID, passport, or birth certificate)
 - Proof of residency in the county where you're filing
- Pay the filing fee (\$100-\$250) or apply for a fee waiver if eligible.

Step 2: Meet Publication Requirements or Request an Exemption

Some states require you to publish notice of your name change in a local newspaper, but transgender individuals may qualify for exemptions.

- Check your state's publication rules.
- If required, follow the court's publication instructions, which may involve:
 - Paying a newspaper to publish the notice (costs vary)
 - Submitting proof of publication to the court
- If eligible, request an exemption based on privacy or safety concerns. Some states allow:
 - Posting at the courthouse instead of in a newspaper
 - A complete waiver of the publication requirement
- Some states no longer require publication for transgender individuals updating both their name and gender marker.

Step 3: Attend a Court Hearing (If Required)

Some states require a hearing, while others approve name changes without one.

- Be prepared to answer questions about why you're changing your name.
- If you're transgender, a letter from a therapist can help, though it's not always required.
- In many states, judges approve name changes without a hearing and mail the signed order.

Step 4: Get Certified Copies of Your Court Order

1. Request at least 4-5 certified copies.
2. Be ready to pay a fee per copy (\$5-\$40 each).
3. You'll need these copies to update your identification documents.

UPDATING YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY INFORMATION

Your Social Security record should be updated first since many agencies verify information against it.

Step 1: Prepare Your Application

1. Download and complete **Form SS-5 (Application for a Social Security Card)** from the Social Security Administration's website.
2. Gather these required documents:
 - A certified copy of your name change court order
 - Your current ID (even if it still has your previous name)
 - Proof of U.S. citizenship or legal status (passport, birth certificate, or immigration documents)

Step 2: Apply in Person or by Mail

1. Locate your nearest **Social Security office** using the SSA office locator on their website.
2. Submit your application in person or by mail, depending on your local office's requirements.
3. Processing times vary, but your name update is usually completed within a few days.
4. Expect your new Social Security card in the mail within two weeks.

Step 3: Updating Your Gender Marker

Important Update on U.S. Passports As of March 2025, U.S. citizens can still legally change their names and update their passports to reflect these changes. However, recent policy changes have affected the ability to update gender markers on U.S. passports. On January 20, 2025, President Donald Trump issued an executive order mandating that federal documents, including passports, reflect only the biological sex assigned at birth. Consequently, the U.S. Department of State ceased processing passport applications requesting gender marker changes or the nonbinary "X" marker. Existing passports with an "X" marker remain valid until they expire. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has filed a federal lawsuit challenging the administration's policy, arguing that it violates constitutional rights.

For more information:

- Trump's new passport rules and their impact on transgender Americans: www.vox.com/politics/399502/transgender-passports-lgbtq-trump-marco-rubio-travel-gender
- The Implications of Trump's Executive Order on Sex: www.time.com/7210389/donald-trump-executive-order-sex-gender-id
- The ACLU Works with Trans Plaintiffs to Sue Trump Over Passport Restrictions: www.them.us/story/aclu-sues-trump-trans-passport-restrictions

These developments have led to confusion and challenges for transgender and nonbinary individuals seeking accurate identification documents. While legal name changes can still be reflected on U.S. passports, updates to gender markers are currently restricted to the sex assigned at birth, following recent federal policy changes.

UPDATING YOUR DRIVER'S LICENSE OR STATE ID

Once your Social Security record is updated, you can move on to your state ID.

Step 1: Gather Documents

1. Certified court order for your name change
2. Updated Social Security card or proof of name change from SSA
3. Current driver's license or state ID (which you'll surrender)
4. Documentation for a gender marker change, if applicable (varies by state)

Step 2: Visit Your Local DMV

1. Complete the application for a new ID or license.
2. Pay the required fee.
3. Have a new photo taken.
4. Surrender your old license/ID.

Step 3: Receive Your New ID

Many states issue a temporary ID on the spot, with the permanent one arriving by mail.

UPDATING YOUR BIRTH CERTIFICATE

Birth certificate updates are handled by the state where you were born, not where you live.

Step 1: Research Your Birth State's Requirements

1. Check [TransEquality.org/Documents](https://transequality.org/documents) or contact your birth state's vital records office.
2. Determine what your state requires:
 - Some states require a court order for gender marker changes.
 - Others accept physician letters.
 - Some states do not allow amendments at all.

Step 2: Gather Documents

1. Certified court order for name change
2. Documentation for gender marker change (if required and allowed by your birth state)
3. Completed application form from your birth state's vital records office
4. Payment for processing fees

Step 3: Submit Your Application

1. Mail documents to the vital records office.
2. Some states require an in-person visit.
3. Some allow third-party services to handle the process.

BIRTH CERTIFICATE UPDATES IN ARIZONA

For those born in Arizona, the Bureau of Vital Records requires a notarized letter from a physician confirming that the individual has undergone appropriate clinical treatment for gender transition to amend the gender marker on a birth certificate. However, as of August 2024, a federal judge ruled that individuals in Arizona can legally change the sex designation on their birth certificates without undergoing sex reassignment surgery. Be sure to check with the Arizona Department of Health Services for the latest requirements.

UPDATING OTHER IMPORTANT RECORDS

After your primary IDs are updated, work on other records:

Financial Accounts

- Bank accounts, credit cards, loans, and retirement plans
- Credit reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian, TransUnion)

Insurance and Medical Records

- Health, life, auto, and home insurance policies
- Medical providers and pharmacy records

Employment and Education Records

- Employer HR records
- Professional licenses and certifications
- School transcripts and diplomas

Other Important Documents

- Voter registration
- Property deeds and vehicle titles
- Wills, trusts, and estate planning documents

FOR MANY LGBTQIA+ INDIVIDUALS, THIS PROCESS IS COMPLEX BUT DEEPLY MEANINGFUL.

Getting legal recognition of your name and gender can ease everyday challenges and affirm your identity in all aspects of life. If you need support, local LGBTQ+ organizations may offer free or low-cost legal help to guide you through the process.

LINKS AND RESOURCES

- **General Name Change Information**
 - FindLaw Name & Gender Marker Change Guide: <https://www.findlaw.com/lgbtq-law/how-to-change-your-legal-name-and-gender-marker.html>
 - LegalZoom Guide to Name Changes: <https://www.legalzoom.com/articles/the-complete-guide-to-legally-changing-your-name>
- **Trans-Specific Name & Gender Marker Changes**
 - National Center for Transgender Equality: ID Documents Guide: <https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/ID-Documents-Overview.pdf>
 - Howard Brown Legal Name Change Roadmap: <https://howardbrown.org/tgd-legal-change-roadmap/>
- **Arizona-Specific Resources**
 - University of Arizona: Name and Gender Marker Change Guide: <https://lgbtq.arizona.edu/name-and-gender-change>
 - Transgender Name Change Procedures in Arizona: <https://www.namechangelaw.com/transgender-name-change-local-court-procedures.htm>
 - VoteRiders: Arizona Trans and Nonbinary Voter Information: <https://www.voteriders.org/pride/arizona/>
 - Southern Arizona Gender Alliance (SAGA): Name and Gender Change Guide: <https://starstogether.org/name-gender-change/>
- **Additional Resources**
 - ACTEC Legal Name Change Video: <https://www.actec.org/resource-center/video/transgender-how-to-change-your-legal-name-and-gender-marker-on-vital-records/>
 - OHSU Gender Clinic Name Change Handout: <https://www.ohsu.edu/sites/default/files/2020-12/Gender-Clinic-Name-Change-Handout.pdf>
 - Carleton College Name Change Process: <https://www.carleton.edu/gender-sexuality-center/students/trans-resources/name-change-process/>
 - Blue Notary Name Change Guide: <https://bluenotary.us/how-to-legally-change-your-name/>
- **For more in-depth resources**, visit the National Center for Transgender Equality's ID Documents Center: <https://transequality.org/documents>