

HOW DO I ASK THE COURT FOR ADOPTION INFORMATION?



**Thurston County Superior Court
Family & Juvenile Court
2801 32ND Avenue SW
Tumwater, WA 98512
Phone: (360) 709-3201**

Do you want to learn more about the birth parent of an adopted child, or about a person who was adopted? If so, there are a few ways to get that information. This is a guide about how to get information from adoption files or through an investigation by a confidential intermediary.

Who Can Get Adoption Information?

The court cannot give adoption information to just anyone. The person asking for information usually must be:

- an adoptive parent,
- a birth parent or (sometimes) a member of his or her family, or
- a person who was adopted.

Also, if an adopted person is under 21 years old, he or she may have to get the adoptive parents' permission.

Am I in the Right Place?

You have to go to the court where the adoption was finalized. The court can check that you are in the right place. Give the court the following information, as best you can:

- the adopted child's name, either before or after the adoption;

- the child’s date of birth;
- the date of the adoption; and
- the names of the birth parents or adoptive parents.

What Information Can I Get from the Court File?

There is a process to get “nonidentifying information” from the court file.

“Nonidentifying information” is information about the birth parent or adoption that does not identify the birth parent.

Nonidentifying Information is:

- Age in years at the time of the adoption;
- Heritage, including nationality, ethnic background, and race;
- Education, including number of years of school completed at the time of adoption, but not the name or location of school;
- General physical appearance, including height, weight, color of hair, eyes, and skin, or other information of a similar nature;
- Religion;
- Occupation, but not specific titles or places of employment;
- Talents, hobbies, and special interests;
- Circumstances leading to the adoption;
- Medical and genetic history of birth parents;
- First names;
- Other children of birth parents by age, sex, and medical history;
- Extended family of birth parents by age, sex, and medical history;
- The fact of death, and age and cause, if known;
- Photographs;
- Name of agency or individual that facilitated the adoption.

(RCW 26.33.020, RCW 26.33.340.)

How Do I Get “Nonidentifying Information” from the Court File?

Contact court administration at the Thurston County Family & Juvenile Court. Someone there can help you. You will need to fill out a form called “Request for Release of Non-identifying Information.” You should get it notarized.

How Do I Get an Adoption Decree or Other Documents from the Sealed Adoption File?

To get an adoption decree or another sealed document from the file, you need to show the court that there is “good cause” to give you that document. Someone at the court administration desk at Family & Juvenile Court can give you a form to fill out. You should explain whether you want documents that include identifying information or not. The court

cannot give out identifying information without appointing a confidential intermediary. But the court can let you have documents that have confidential information redacted (blacked out) to protect the identity of people involved in the adoption.

Can I Contact a Birth Parent or Adopted Child, or Learn His or Her Identity?

A confidential intermediary can search for a birth parent, adopted child, or adoptive parent. If the confidential intermediary finds the person, he or she will ask them whether they are willing to release their information. If the person who is being search for has died, the confidential intermediary may contact his or her family members.

(RCW 26.33.343)

How Can I get a Confidential Intermediary to Help Me?

Follow these steps:

1. Contact the Department of Health to find out whether the person you want to contact has said whether they want to be contacted.
2. Fill out a form to ask for a confidential intermediary. Court administration can give you the form.
3. The court will review your papers and, if you qualify, can then give out a list of confidential intermediaries.
4. Contact a confidential intermediary from the list to find one who is willing to work on your case.
5. The confidential intermediary will then investigate the case and will let you know how the investigation is going and when the process is complete.

Adoption Resources

Washington State Adoption Information Exchange:

A listing of adoption resources in Washington State for adoptive families, birth parents, and adopted individuals.

<https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/adoption/resources>

Department of Health:

- Learn whether a birth parent wants to be contacted.
- Get an original (pre-adoption) birth certificate.

(800) 525-0127

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/LicensesPermitsandCertificates/BirthDeathMarriageandDivorce/Adoptions.aspx>