

NAME CHANGES

There are a number of reasons why a person would choose to change his or her name. This section briefly describes how the process works in California and identifies resources for individuals who are considering a name change.

NAME CHANGES GENERALLY

In order to change one's name, a petition must be filed in the superior court in the county where the person seeking the name change lives. Several other documents must be filed together with the petition. For electronic versions of the required forms, visit www.courtinfo.ca.gov, click "Forms" and select "Name Changes" on the menu bar. For step-by-step instructions on completing a name change, begin at www.courtinfo.ca.gov, click "Self Help," then "More Topics," then "How to Change Your Name." Some counties in California require additional local forms to be filed; no additional forms are required for filing in San Diego County other than those available at the above website.

Amending a Birth Certificate

Changing one's name does not automatically change one's birth certificate; separate procedures must be completed. If a person wishes to have his or her California birth certificate amended to reflect a name change, he or she must contact the Department of Public Health (see below).

NAME CHANGES IN LIGHT OF A RECENT MARRIAGE OR DIVORCE

A person (traditionally a woman) wishing to change her last name to her husband's last name when she is married may do so without filing a petition. After obtaining a certified copy of the marriage certificate, she can take that copy to the Social Security Administration office and the California Department of Motor Vehicles office to have her name changed on records created and administered by those agencies.

A name change can be included as part of marital dissolution (divorce) proceedings if a person wishes to have her name restored as it was prior to marriage.

NAMES CHANGES TO PROTECT IDENTITY OR LOCATION

Sometimes people seek a name change as a means of protecting their identity or because they wish to make it difficult for others to find them. The procedure for completing a name change under these circumstances would be no different than as described above, involving the filing of a petition with the local superior court. It is important for individuals seeking a name change to fully understand that their previous name will no longer be used after the name change is completed.

The State of California has a special program to assist victims of domestic violence and stalking. The Safe at Home Program is coordinated by the California Secretary of State and provides name change assistance as well as an alternate mailing address, so that participants do not have to use their actual address on any records or documents. For more information, visit <http://www.sos.ca.gov/safeathome/>.

Getting Help

General Legal

Student Legal Services, 858.534.4374 or <http://sls.ucsd.edu>

Superior Court of California, Self-Help for Name Changes,
<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/other/namechange.htm>

Amending a Birth Certificate

California Department of Public Health

Office of Vital Records – MS 5103

P.O. Box 997410

Sacramento, CA 95899-7410

Telephone: (916) 445-2684

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/birthdeathmar/Pages/default.aspx>