

Name & Gender Marker Change Guide for Residents of Massachusetts

This guide accompanies the more detailed [ID Documents Center](#)¹ of the National Center for Transgender Equality, and the Transgender Law Center's [Quick Guide to Changing Federal Identity Documents](#)². These links can be used by people in any state and by people who are not U.S. citizens. Another [quick-guide for Massachusetts](#)³ is also available through the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition.

The [Transgender ID Project](#)⁴ through GLAD provides free resources for trans and gender diverse folks living in New England seeking to update their name and gender on federal and state documents.

[Namesake](#)⁵ is an organization that streamlines the legal name and gender marker change process for trans and gender diverse folks in Massachusetts. Individuals can complete necessary paperwork and manage identity documents.

[New England Law Boston's Identity Affirmation Project](#)⁶ helps trans and gender diverse individuals with the name change process in Massachusetts.

The first step in changing your name and gender marker is getting a [Massachusetts court-ordered name change](#)⁷. Parents and guardians changing the name of their child under 18 should follow instructions from mass.gov on [legally changing the name of a child under 18](#)⁸.

Anyone can petition for a change of name for any reason except to get out of debts or legal obligations. Name changes are made through a person's county probate court. To change your name as an adult, you will need to file the following documents with your [local MA probate court](#)⁹.

1. [Petition to Change Name of Adult \(CJP 27\)](#)¹⁰
 - a. **This form must be notarized.** Do not sign this form unless you are in the presence of a notary who can notarize your form. You can reach out to transhealth@fenwayhealth.org for help with this.
2. A certified copy of your birth certificate (long-form). This is available from the [Registry of Vital Records](#)¹¹ for those born in Massachusetts, or from the city or town where you were born. Birth certificates that are not written in English must include a written translation signed by the person translating the birth certificate with a statement that they are fluent in the language and English, and that the translation is a true and accurate translation. The translator's signature must be notarized.
3. If you have changed your name in the past, you must file the certified document showing that name change for each time your name changed. Examples of this are a marriage certificate, Judgment of Divorce, or other court decree of name change.
4. A [Court Activity Record Information \(CARI\) and Warrant Management System Release Request Form \(CJP 34\)](#)¹².

It costs between \$150 and \$280 to change one's name depending on your circumstances and jurisdiction. It may be possible to petition for support or removal of these fees. [You can find out if you are eligible and file for indigency](#)¹³ online.

A name change takes different amounts of time depending on your jurisdiction. Some counties require that you publish a copy of your name change in a local newspaper, which means that there will be a

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searchable, public record of your name change. You can [file a motion to waive the publication requirement](#)¹⁴. The publication requirement is generally waived if an individual is changing their first and middle names only.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts also recognizes a common law name change. This means that if a person adopts a name and uses it consistently, this can become a legal name through common law [Merolevitz, Petitioner](#)¹⁵, 320 Mass. 448 (1946). This type of name change can make updating documents like social security or state IDs challenging because there is no formal documentation, but common law name changes can be helpful at school or work.

Once you have a court ordered name change, you can update your federal and state identity documents. We recommend getting several certified copies of your court-ordered name change to have on hand. You can pick these up from your local probate court.

Social Security Name and/or Gender Change

To change your name and gender marker with the Social Security Administration you need to fill out an [Application for a Social Security Card](#)^{16,17}.

You will also need to provide

- [Proof of identity](#)¹⁸ AND
- [Proof of citizenship](#)¹⁹ AND
- A certified copy of your court-ordered name change.

You can select the gender marker that you want to use. Your gender marker is only visible within the Social Security Administration's system and is not displayed on your social security card. Your social security gender marker does not need to match your gender marker on other legal IDs and documents (such as your license, birth certificate, or passport). Your gender marker with other systems (such as your health insurance, state and federal benefits, job or school) may need to match the gender marker with social security.

You may be able to start this application online and then bring your required documents to your [local Social Security office](#)²⁰. You can also submit the application and documents in person, or you can mail the application and documents to your local Social Security office.

DMV/RMV/State License Name and/or Gender Marker Change

This information is for MA residents. See above for resources for documents originating outside of Massachusetts.

Go to the MA RMV with

- A certified copy of your court-ordered name change AND
- [Proof of address](#)²¹ (it's okay if this has your previous legal name on it) AND
- Your Social Security Card with your new legal name change, AND
- The [MA RMV's Application](#)^{22,23} for a state license/ID.

[Click here for more information about changing information on your driver's license or ID card](#)²⁴.

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Passport Name and/or Gender Marker Change

The process for updating your passport varies depending on your circumstances. Please refer to the [Department of State](#)²⁵ for information and forms for passport changes.

You can choose the gender marker that you would like to have on your passport as Male (M), Female (F), or another gender identity (X). The gender marker on your passport does not need to match the gender marker on any other identity documents. If you are changing both your name and gender marker on your passport, you should wait until you have a certified copy of your name change before submitting an application.

Birth Certificate Name and/or Sex Designation Change

Many jurisdictions allow a change of name on birth certificates, however, not all states or countries allow people to change their sex designation regardless of medical or surgical gender affirmation treatments. *The following information is for people born in Massachusetts. See above for resources for documents originating outside of Massachusetts.*

To amend the sex designation and name on your Massachusetts birth certificate, you should submit

- [An affidavit indicating your sex and name](#)²⁶ AND
- [A notarized physician's statement](#)²⁷ that you have completed medical intervention for the purpose of permanent sex reassignment. Surgery and/or hormone therapy are not required for this. Reach out to your medical provider for help with this letter, AND
- A certified copy of the court ordered name change (if applicable), AND
- A check or money order for any fees (between \$70-\$82).

[Click here for more information about amending a birth certificate in Massachusetts](#)²⁸.

For people born in other states outside MA, you should research what is possible and needed for amending birth certificates in that location using the [NCTE ID Documents Center](#)²⁹. If you need help amending birth certificates, we recommend that you contact [Lambda Legal](#)³⁰ and request referrals for legal help.

Everything else

After legal documents are changed, you may need to update your health insurance, accounts for state and federal benefits, car registration, auto insurance, medical records, bank accounts, loan accounts, and human resources for w-2s and tax returns.

It is important to update every service and location of care with your updated information. You should inform your medical providers, subscriptions, services, mail, utilities, landlords, banks, etc. with this information. Updates are dependent on the individual who handles the documentation needed for each change needed.

A note about health insurance gender markers

Unless someone has already completed gender affirming surgery and no longer has the organs from the

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sex originally listed on their health insurance, you may consider keeping your health insurance gender marker the same as the sex you were assigned at birth.

It is possible to work out most billing issues, however, this may cause delays or denials in services needed for natal body parts and organs for some individuals. For instance, if your health insurance has you listed as male, you may be denied coverage for gynecological care. Unless someone has Medicare, which is linked to Social Security records, they can change their gender marker everywhere else and in all places that are public (license, passport, etc.) while keeping the gender with their health insurance related to the body parts and organs for which they will need ongoing medical treatment and routine screenings.

If you experience discrimination at any point in changing your name or gender marker, please reach out to the [Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition](#)³¹ to share your story and get help.

Please contact your care team for help with any of these needs. Call 617-267-0900 and ask to speak with a case manager.

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- ¹ <https://transequality.org/documents>
- ² <https://transgenderlawcenter.org/resources/id>
- ³ <https://www.masstpc.org/identity-documents/>
- ⁴ <https://www.glad.org/id-project-guides/>
- ⁵ <https://www.joinnamesake.com/>
- ⁶ <https://nesl.edu/practical-experiences/centers/center-for-law-and-social-responsibility/projects/identity-affirmation-project>
- ⁷ <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/legally-change-your-name-as-an-adult>
- ⁸ <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/legally-change-the-name-of-a-child-under-18>
- ⁹ https://www.mass-doc.com/probate_court_dir.htm
- ¹⁰ <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/probate-and-family-court-petition-to-change-name-of-adult-cjp-27>
- ¹¹ <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/order-a-birth-marriage-or-death-certificate>
- ¹² <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/probate-and-family-court-court-activity-record-information-and-warrant-management-system-release-request-form-cjp-34>
- ¹³ <https://www.mass.gov/indigency-waiver-of-court-fees>
- ¹⁴ <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/probate-and-family-court-motion-cjd-400>
- ¹⁵ <http://masscases.com/cases/sjc/320/320mass448.html>
- ¹⁶ <https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf>
- ¹⁷ <https://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber/>
- ¹⁸ <https://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber/ss5doc.htm>
- ¹⁹ <https://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber/ss5doc.htm>
- ²⁰ <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>
- ²¹ <https://www.mass.gov/guides/massachusetts-identification-id-requirements#massachusetts-residency-documents->
- ²² <https://www.mass.gov/guides/massachusetts-identification-id-requirements>
- ²³ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/learners-permit-drivers-license-and-id-card-application/download>
- ²⁴ <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/change-information-on-your-drivers-license-or-id-card>
- ²⁵ <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/have-passport/change-correct.html>
- ²⁶ <https://www.mass.gov/files/2017-08/r-116-applicant-affidavit-birth-certificate-amendment-following-sex-reassignment.pdf>
- ²⁷ <https://www.mass.gov/files/2017-08/r-115-physician-statement-birth-certificate-amendment-following-sex-reassignment.pdf>
- ²⁸ <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/amend-a-birth-certificate-following-medical-intervention-for-the-purpose-of-sex-reassignment>
- ²⁹ <https://transequality.org/documents>
- ³⁰ <https://www.lambdalegal.org/helpdesk>
- ³¹ <https://www.masstpc.org/contact-us/>

Name & Gender Marker Change Checklist

Step 1: File the Petition for a Court Ordered Name Change. Submit the following documents to your local probate court in person, via mail, or online.

- ☐ Completed Petition to Change Name of Adult (CJP 27)
 - ☐ **This form must be notarized.** Do not sign this form unless you are in the presence of a notary who can notarize your form.
- ☐ Certified copy of your birth certificate (long-form)
- ☐ Court Activity Record Information (CARI) and Warrant Management System Release Request Form (CJP 34).
- ☐ The filing fee OR a completed waiver of indigency
- ☐ [If applicable] A completed motion to waive the publication requirement
- ☐ [If you have changed your name in the past] A certified document showing that name change for each time your name changed.

Step 2: Apply for a new Social Security card. Submit the following documents to your local Social Security Administration in person or via mail.

- ☐ Completed application for a Social Security card
- ☐ Certified copy of the court ordered name change
- ☐ An unexpired identification document that shows your name, date of birth, and preferably a recent photograph. Acceptable documents include driver's license, state ID, or US Passport. If you do not have any of these documents, you can show a health insurance card (not Medicare), employee ID, US military ID, or a school ID. It's okay if your document includes your former name.
- ☐ Proof of US citizenship or lawful immigration status, such as a passport, birth certificate, or immigration document.

Step 3: Go to the Registry of Motor Vehicles for a new REAL ID Driver's License or Massachusetts ID. Bring the following documents with you.

- ☐ Certified copy of your court ordered name change
- ☐ Completed Driver's License, Learner's Permit or ID Card Application (you can start this online)
- ☐ Your newly issued Social Security card with your new name
- ☐ An unexpired document that shows that you are legally living in the United States. Acceptable documents include a US passport, US birth certificate, green card, or another immigration document if you are not a US citizen (it's okay if this document includes your former name).
- ☐ Massachusetts residency documents (1 for a Standard driver's license/ID, 2 for a REAL ID). Acceptable documents include your current license or ID. See <https://www.mass.gov/guides/massachusetts-identification-id-requirements> for the full list of acceptable documents.
- ☐ Cash, check, money order, or credit card to pay the fee for a new ID.

Step 4: Update your passport. Visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/have-passport/change-correct.html> to find out which process applies to you.

Step 5: Apply for an updated birth certificate. File the following documents with the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics in person or by mail.

- ☐ Completed affidavit indicating your sex and name
- ☐ Completed and **notarized** physician's statement
- ☐ Certified copy of the court ordered name change (if applicable), AND
- ☐ Check or money order for fees (between \$70-\$82).