**How to Legally Change Your Name and/or Gender**

*Updated January 2025*

If you are interested in legally changing your first, middle, and/or last name or changing your gender marker, here is a step-by-step guide on how to do it!

Whether you are changing your name to better align with your gender identity, are recently married or divorced, or any other reason, we have made a comprehensive guide for your convenience.

**Important:** Some steps for the name and gender marker change process need to be followed in order, so please be sure to read the entire guide and plan to follow the steps in accordance with the guidance provided.

Please note that the name change process will differ based on the reason for the name change (i.e., marriage, divorce, or court order). The name and gender marker change process will also differ based on your county/state of residence.

As laws change, the required steps and/or documentation to complete this process may change. These changes may be based on your state of residence, state of birth, or both. The information detailed in the steps below may become out of date, but the links and footnotes will bring you to the most up-to-date information.

This document has some links embedded for residents of Virginia/Rockingham County, VA. If you are not a resident of Virginia, please use the steps provided below to find the websites for your local state/county of residence. Guidance on how to find websites for your specific state/county is included in the footnotes at the bottom of each page.

This document is written for adults who desire a name and/or gender marker change. The age of majority varies by state (i.e., 18 to 21 years old). If you have not yet reached the age of majority in your state of residence (to complete most of the steps below) or state of birth (if you would like to make changes to your birth certificate), a parent or legal guardian will be required to assist you in this process.

This document acknowledges the existence of intersex individuals. At present, existing legislation does not explicitly address the specific needs or considerations of intersex persons within the name and/or gender marker change process. Future legislative efforts may consider addressing this gap to ensure inclusivity and clarity.

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**Name Change by Court Order and/or Gender Marker Change**

1. **Legally changing your name and/or gender marker**

Required documentation and forms vary by your state and county of residence.

* **Name change by court order** (to align with your gender identity or for personal reasons, but not due to marriage or divorce): Visit your local court’s website to fill out the [Adult Name Change](https://www.rockinghamcountyva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/31) form1
  + Once your name change is approved by the court, you will receive a certified copy of the court order for change of name in the mail
  + You need to keep this document in your records (i.e., stored with your other important documents, such as your birth certificate and Social Security card)
  + For residents of Rockingham County, VA (Rockingham County Circuit Court) see <https://www.rockinghamcountyva.gov/360/Name-Change-Information-Forms>1
* After your name change is approved, you will need a certified copy of the court order for change of name to notify other entities of your name change (see Steps 2-8)

* + You should request at least 2 additional certified copies. You may request these additional copies at the time you submit your name change request or after you receive your name change approval.
* **Gender marker change**
  + A court order for a change of gender is not required to change your gender marker with Social Security, on a U.S. passport, or for any of the steps below in the state of Virginia
  + For state-specific requirements to change your gender marker on your driver’s license and/or birth certificate, see <https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/identity_document_laws>2

1. **Changing your name and/or gender with the Social Security Administration**

* **Name change**: Visit the SSA website (<https://www.ssa.gov/personal-record/change-name>)3 and answer a few questions to determine what documents you will need and whether you will need to submit your name change request online, by mail, or in person at your local Social Security office.
* **Gender marker change**: Visit the SSA website (<https://www.ssa.gov/personal-record/change-sex-identification>)4 and answer a few questions to determine what documents you will need. You must visit your local Social Security office in person.
  + Per the SSA website: “You don't need to provide medical or legal evidence of your sex designation. Currently, you can change your sex identification to either male or female, but we are examining ways to provide an unspecified sex identification option in the future.”
  + **Important:** Although your Social Security card does not show a gender marker, other government agencies use your Social Security records to verify your gender
    - E.g., if your gender marker on your W-2 does not match your Social Security records, SSA may contact your employer to question the difference, thereby disclosing your gender marker change. Changing your gender marker with SSA will help you avoid this situation.
  + You will need to fill out the [Application for a Social Security Card (Form SS-5) (PDF)](https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf)3,4
    - When filling this form out, simply check the box with your new preferred gender marker
    - If you are also changing your name with the SSA, you will put your new legal name on this form as well
* After submitting your application to the SSA (whether in person, online, or by mail), you will receive a free replacement card in the mail
  + Most cards arrive 14 days after your application is approved

1. **Changing your name and/or gender with the DMV**

While there are no barriers to changing your name on your driver’s license, state-specific laws may impede your ability to change your gender marker. Be sure to check current laws in your state of residence before attempting to change your gender marker.

* For Virginia residents see <https://dmv.virginia.gov/records/personal-information-updates>5,6 for name and/or gender marker changes
* **For name change**: Visit your state’s DMV website for the required documentation and forms needed to change your name on your driver’s license5. You will need to:
  + [Start online](https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/online-services/name-change)5 or complete a [Driver's License and Identification Card Application](https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/forms/dl1p.pdf)5 requesting a name change
    - If you are also changing your gender marker with the DMV, simply check the box with your new preferred gender marker on the above form
  + Visit your local [DMV customer service center](https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/locations) and bring your court order for change of name
  + Bring your valid local state’s driver's license, learner's permit, or photo identification card, if you currently hold one
  + If you started applying online: Your confirmation email
  + For Virginia residents see <https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/online-services/name-change>5
* **For gender marker change**: Visit your state’s DMV website for the steps to change your gender marker6
  + You may be eligible to change your sex designation [online](https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/online-services/gender)6
  + If not, you can change your sex designation any time you apply for, renew or replace a driver’s license, learner's permit, identification card or driver privilege card
  + Per the Virginia DMV: “Sex designation indicators are displayed on your DMV credential as male (M), female (F) or non-binary (X). Certification from a healthcare provider is not required.”
  + For Virginia residents see <https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/online-services/gender>6

1. **Changing your name and/or gender on your U.S. Passport**

* If you have a passport and plan to travel internationally in the near future, you may want to consider changing your name and/or gender marker immediately after Step 1 due to combined mailing and processing times of up to 4-10 weeks
  + Per the official travel.state.gov website: “If you are traveling in less than 3 weeks, make an appointment to renew in person at a passport agency or center. Your appointment must be within 14 calendar days of your travel date. If you are traveling in more than 3 weeks, mail your completed application and documents to one of the addresses below.” (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/have-passport/renew.html>)
* To determine whether you are eligible to renew your passport in person, online, or by mail, visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/have-passport.html> or Google “U.S. passport renewal”.
  + If you are submitting your documents by mail, this is where your additional certified copies of your court order for change of name will come in handy
* **For name change**: To determine what documents and forms are required based on your situation, visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/have-passport/change-correct.html>7
  + If you are also changing your gender marker, you will fill out both your name and gender marker change on the same form (see below)
* **For gender marker change**: To determine what documents and forms are required based on your situation, visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/need-passport/selecting-your-gender-marker.html>8
  + Per the official travel.state.gov website: “You can select male (M), female (F), or unspecified or another gender identity (X) as the gender marker on your U.S. passport book and card. The gender marker you select does not need to match the gender on your citizenship evidence or photo ID. You do not need to provide medical documentation to change your gender marker.”
  + **Important:** “If you have an X gender marker, you may not be able to travel to some other countries. Go to our [LGBTQI+ Travelers’ Page](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/lgbtqi.html) to learn about the safety, security, and entry requirements of the country you plan to visit.”

1. **Changing your name and/or gender on your Birth Certificate (if applicable)**

While there are no barriers to changing your name on your birth certificate, state-specific laws may impede your ability to change your gender marker. Be sure to check current laws in your state of birth before attempting to change your gender marker. If you would like to change your name and/or gender marker on your birth certificate, follow the steps below:

* Note that it is not required to change your name and/or gender marker on your birth certificate, even if you have updated other official government documents (e.g., driver’s license, Social Security card).
  + If you would prefer to maintain your original birth certificate or are unable to make changes to your birth certificate, you may use your U.S. passport as proof of identification (e.g., for employment purposes).
* Visit the official website for the state in which you were born to proceed with your name and/or gender marker change9,10. Required documentation and forms vary by state.
  + **Name change**: For individuals born in Virginia to request a name change on your birth certificate see:
    - To submit by mail: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/vital-records/how-to-request-an-amendment-to-a-birth-certificate/>9
    - To submit online: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/vital-records/applications-for-a-vital-record/>9
    - If you will also be requesting a gender marker change, see below
  + **Gender marker change**: For individuals born in Virginia, see <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/vital-records/what-is-the-procedure-to-update-a-virginia-birth-certificate-after-a-person-has-undergone-gender-transition/>10 to request a gender marker change
    - Per the Virginia Department of Health, Vital Records website: “The [Changing Sex Designation (VS42) form](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/93/2020/07/VS42_Gender-Designation-Form.pdf)10 must be completed by the health care provider from whom the person has received treatment stating that the person has undergone clinically appropriate treatment for gender transition.”
* After filling out the above form, see <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/vital-records/applications-for-a-vital-record/>10 to submit your request for a gender marker change (and name change, if applicable)
* **Note:** Please see other considerations in section 7 (changing your name with the Selective Service) if you will be changing your name and/or gender marker on your birth certificate

1. **Changing your name and/or gender with your insurance, bank, school, etc.**

* **Insurance**
  + *Health insurance*
    - You should inform your health insurance company immediately after you receive your court order for a name change. They may require that you submit a certified copy of your court order for a name change.
    - **Gender marker change**: If you choose to update your gender marker with your health insurance, you may want to have a discussion with your medical provider(s) before taking steps to do so
    - It is important that your health insurance company’s records match your doctor’s records (name and gender) to avoid confusion and delay or a denial of claims. It is also important for your medical provider(s) to be aware of any biological aspects that may impact your medical care. As such, you and your medical provider(s) can discuss the best course of action to ensure that your claims and insurance providers have matching information.
  + *Other insurance companies (e.g., property, auto, life)* 
    - You should inform any other insurance companies (e.g., property, auto, life) with which you are insured immediately after you receive your court order for a name change
    - Consider whether any other insurance carriers have your gender on file (e.g., auto, life) and if you would like to update your gender marker. You will likely need an official government-issued form of identification (e.g., driver’s license, passport) showing your updated gender marker or a court order for a change of gender
    - It is important that your name and gender on your auto insurance matches your driver’s license
* **Banks, Creditors, and Financial Institutions** 
  + You must inform your banks, any creditors, and any financial institutions where you hold an account when you legally change your name (e.g., credit cards, debit cards, checks, loans, mortgage)
  + You will likely be asked to provide a certified copy of the court order for a name change
  + **Gender marker change**: Once you have updated your gender marker with Social Security, you may update your gender marker with your bank, on your loans, mortgage, and with any other creditors or financial institutions that may have your gender on file
    - You will likely need an official government-issued form of identification (e.g., driver’s license, passport) showing your updated gender marker or a court order for a change of gender
  + You will need to inform the 3 credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) of your name and/or gender marker change
    - Equifax
      * Name change: <https://www.equifax.com/personal/help/article-list/-/h/a/correct-dispute-information-credit-reports/>11
      * Name and/or gender marker change for trans/non-binary individuals: <https://www.equifax.com/personal/education/credit/report/articles/-/learn/change-update-name-credit-report/>11,12
    - Experian
      * Name change: <https://www.experian.com/blogs/ask-experian/how-to-report-name-change-to-credit-bureau/>11
      * Name and/or gender marker change for trans/non-binary individuals: <https://www.experian.com/blogs/ask-experian/how-transgender-people-can-change-their-name-on-experian-credit-report/>11,12
    - TransUnion
      * Name change: <https://www.transunion.com/customer-support/editing-personal-information?atvy=%7B%22261809%22%3A%22Experience+B%22%7D>11
      * Name and/or gender marker change for trans/non-binary individuals: <https://www.transunion.com/blog/credit-advice/transgender-name-change-credit-report?atvy=%7B%22261809%22%3A%22Experience+B%22%7D>11,12
* **School/university**
  + *For students/faculty/staff at JMU*
    - Students
      * Contact JMU’s [Office of the Registrar](https://www.jmu.edu/registrar/st_contact.shtml)13 to inform them of your name and/or gender marker change
      * You will likely need a certified copy of your court order for a name change and, if applicable, an official government-issued form of identification (e.g., driver’s license, passport) showing your updated gender marker or a court order for a change of gender
      * See <https://www.jmu.edu/safezone/area.shtml>14 for a list of places where you may update your name and/or gender marker/pronouns through JMU
    - Faculty/staff
      * Contact JMU’s [Office of Human Resources](https://www.jmu.edu/humanresources/about/contact-us.shtml)13 to inform them of your name and/or gender marker change
      * You will likely need a certified copy of your court order for a name change and, if applicable, an official government-issued form of identification (e.g., driver’s license, passport) showing your updated gender marker or a court order for a change of gender
      * See <https://www.jmu.edu/safezone/area.shtml>14 for a list of places where you may update your name and/or gender marker/pronouns through JMU
    - Chosen Name and Preferred Pronouns
      * Per JMU’s website: “The Chosen Name Project allows students, faculty, and staff to select a Chosen Name in [MyMadison](https://mymadison.jmu.edu/" \t "_parent" \o "MyMadison Login Page), which will display instead of their legal name in an increasing number of JMU systems. Legal names will continue to be used whenever required by University Policy, State or Federal Law, and in systems not included in this project.”
      * See <https://www.jmu.edu/computing/accounts-and-access/chosen-name.shtml>15 for more information on designating a chosen name through JMU
      * See <https://www.jmu.edu/safezone/area.shtml>14 for a list of places where you may update your name and/or gender marker/pronouns through JMU
  + For students/staff at other schools/universities: contact your local school’s administrative office or your university’s registration office (or Human Resources for staff) for how to proceed with updating your legal name and/or gender marker
    - **Name change**: You will likely be asked to provide a certified copy of the court order for a name change
    - **Gender maker change**: You will likely need an official government-issued form of identification (e.g., driver’s license, passport) showing your updated gender marker or a court order for a change of gender
* **Other Legal Documents** 
  + After you receive a court order for change of name, you should change your name in any legal documents in which you are named
  + These include your lease, wills, powers of attorney, advanced health directive, deeds, protective orders, restraining orders, etc., or such documents that name you as a party (e.g., if you are listed as a beneficiary). Changing your name on these documents ensures that your rights and powers in the document remain intact
* Contact your [state's social services office](https://www.usa.gov/state-social-services)16 if you receive SNAP (food stamps), TANF (welfare), or other public assistance to notify them of your name and/or gender marker change
* If you receive veterans’ health care or benefits, [notify the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)](https://www.va.gov/resources/how-to-change-your-legal-name-on-file-with-va/) 17 of your name change
  + **Gender marker change**:
    - Veterans can enter their preferred name and gender identity directly through their VA.gov portal. For a step-by-step guide on this process, see <https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/docs/2023/Instructions-Change-your-Preferred-Name-and-Gender-Identity-in-VA.pdf>17
    - For changing your name and/or gender marker within the VA/DoD system, see <https://www.transveteran.org/name-gender-change#:~:text=This%20field%20is%20available%20for,a%20Toolkit%20Person%20Verification%20Task>.17 and <https://www.transveteran.org/for-veterans>17
    - For the current [Veterans Health Administration policy](https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=6431)17 for providing care to transgender veterans (amended August 19, 2024), see <https://transequality.org/resources/know-your-rights-veterans-health-administration-care-transgender-veterans#:~:text=Yes.,VHA's%20Identity%20Management%20Fact%20Sheet>. 17
* **Miscellaneous places to update your name and/or gender** **(if applicable)**
  + Airline accounts
    - You may be able to file a name and/or gender marker change online for a given airline or call their customer service for support to start this process
    - You will likely need a certified copy of your court order for a name change and, if applicable, an official government-issued form of identification (e.g., driver’s license, passport) showing your updated gender marker or a court order for a change of gender
  + Personal email address/profile name
  + Social media accounts
  + Mobile payment apps (e.g., Venmo, Cash App)
  + Apple ID/Android Google Account
  + Grocery store/shopping mobile apps (e.g., Amazon, eBay, Walmart)
  + Fast food mobile apps
  + Other mobile apps on your phone

1. **Changing your name with the Selective Service**

Per the Selective Service System website: “Selective Service bases the registration requirement on gender assigned at birth and not on gender identity or on gender reassignment. Individuals who are born male and changed their gender to female are still required to register. Individuals who are born female and changed their gender to male are not required to register.”

* **Individuals Assigned Female at Birth**
  + If you were assigned female at birth, you do not have to register with the Selective Service, even if you have changed your gender marker, transitioned, undergone gender reassignment surgery, and/or currently identify as male
  + However, if you are applying for federal financial aid, grants, loans, or other benefits as a male, you may be asked to provide proof that you are exempt from the Selective Service
  + To obtain such proof, you should request a Status Information Letter (SIL) from the Selective Service (<https://www.sss.gov/verify/sil/>)18
  + The SIL request form requires female to male individuals to identify as such and attach a copy of a birth certificate showing their sex assigned at birth. If you have already amended the sex on your birth certificate, attach any proof you have to that affect (e.g., a court order for change of gender)
  + The SIL service is free and the exemption letter you will receive does not specify why you are exempt, so it will not disclose your sex assigned at birth or gender identity
  + Once you receive your SIL, keep it in your files

* **Individuals Assigned Male at Birth**
  + If you were assigned male at birth, you must register for the Selective Service if you are between the ages of 18 and 25, even if you have changed your gender marker, transitioned, undergone gender reassignment surgery, and/or currently identify as female

* + You may register online at <https://www.sss.gov/register/>19
  + While you do not need to notify the Selective Service of a change in gender, you are obligated to inform them of a change in name. To notify the Selective Service of your name change, you must call to inform them and provide a copy of the court order for your legal name change and supporting documentation (Call: [847-688-6888](tel:847-688-6888) or toll-free: [888-655-1825](tel:888-655-1825))20
  + In the event that the draft is resumed, and you receive an order to report for examination or induction, you may file a claim for exemption from service21
* See <https://www.sss.gov/faq/#who-needs-to-register> (“I’m a transgender/non-binary person. Am I required to register?”)22 and <https://www.sss.gov/register/who-needs-to-register/#p7> (“Transgender People”)22 for more information

1. **Changing your name and/or gender with the** **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)** **(if applicable)**

If you were born outside of the U.S. and have already been granted some form of permanent legal status in the United States, and you would like your new legal name and/or gender reflected in your USCIS document(s), see below. You will need to complete [Form N-565 (PDF, 467.56 KB)](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/n-565.pdf)23, the Application for Replacement Naturalization/Citizenship Document. See <https://www.uscis.gov/n-565>23 for more information and instructions on filing online or by mail.

* **Please note**, if you are not a permanent resident of the United States and are in the country on a temporary basis, it is important to consult regulations specific to your immigration status and any sponsoring organization to ensure name changes do not cause issues with immigration. You will need to refer to the laws of your home country to begin the name and/or gender marker change process.
* It is recommended that you do not attempt to travel internationally while going through the name change and/or gender marker change process so that you do not encounter issues with mismatching documentation (e.g., differing names on your driver’s license and passport).
* **Name change**: Per the USCIS website, “If you are applying for a new document because your name was changed, you must submit the original USCIS document and a copy of either the original or certified document establishing the name change (such as a marriage certificate, divorce decree, annulment decree, or court order), and complete Part 5. of [Form N-565](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/n-565.pdf).”23
* **Gender marker change**: Per the USCIS website, “If you are applying for a new document that reflects a different gender than is shown on your current document, you must submit the original USCIS document along with one of the forms of evidence listed below supporting the requested official change in gender designation and complete Part 7. of [Form N-565](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/n-565.pdf).”23
  + E.g., A court order granting change of sex or gender, a letter from a licensed health care professional certifying the requested gender designation is consistent with your gender identity, or an amended birth certificate, driver’s license, passport, or other official U.S. government-issued document reflecting the requested gender designation
  + Per the USCIS website, “As of March 31, 2023, you do not need to provide proof of your gender identity when requesting to change your gender marker on immigration documents, except if you are submitting [Form N-565, Application for Replacement Naturalization/Citizenship Document](https://www.uscis.gov/n-565)23. (If you are seeking to change your gender marker on a Certificate of Naturalization or Certificate of Citizenship, you must continue to follow the [Form N-565 instructions (PDF, 257.24 KB)](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/n-565instr.pdf)).”23
* See [Instructions for Form N-565 (PDF, 257.24 KB)](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/n-565instr.pdf)23 for more detailed information for the name and/or gender marker change process

**Name Change by Marriage**

1. **Legally changing your name**

Required documentation and forms vary by your state and county of residence.

* After getting married, obtain a certified copy of the marriage license from the court that issued it to notify other entities of your name change
  + For Rockingham County Circuit Court (Rockingham County, VA) see <https://www.rockinghamcountyva.gov/348/Marriage-License-Information>24
  + If you are notifying these entities of your name change in person, you may use the original marriage license given to you by the court
  + If you are submitting your name change by mail or online (and photocopies are not accepted), you can request additional certified copies as needed from the court that issued it (see Steps 2-7)

1. **Changing your name with the Social Security Administration**

* Visit the SSA website (<https://www.ssa.gov/personal-record/change-name>)25 and answer a few questions to determine what documents you will need and whether you will need to submit your name change request online, by mail, or in person at your local Social Security office
  + You will need to wait 30 days after your marriage before you request a name change
  + You will likely need the marriage certificate and a state-issued ID (e.g., driver’s license)
  + Per the SSA website, you are eligible to submit this name change online if you “[…] have a valid driver’s license or state-issued identification (ID) card and a marriage certificate from a participating state to complete the application electronically. Current participating states are Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. This list will grow as we work to include more states.” (Last Updated: August 29, 2024)
    - See <https://blog.ssa.gov/newlyweds-there-may-be-a-faster-way-to-get-a-social-security-card-that-shows-your-new-name/>25 for more information
* After submitting your application to the SSA (whether in person, online, or by mail), you will receive a free replacement card in the mail
  + Most cards arrive 14 days after your application is approved

1. **Changing your name with the DMV**

Required documentation and forms vary by your state of residence.

* For Virginia residents see <https://dmv.virginia.gov/records/personal-information-updates>5
* Visit your state’s DMV website for the required documentation and forms needed to change your name on your driver’s license. You will need to:
  + [Start online](https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/online-services/name-change)5 or complete a [Driver's License and Identification Card Application](https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/forms/dl1p.pdf)5 requesting a name change
  + Visit a [DMV customer service center](https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/locations) and bring your marriage certificate (showing the change from maiden name/surname at birth to married name)
  + Bring your valid local state’s driver's license, learner's permit, or photo identification card, if you currently hold one
  + If you started applying online: Your confirmation email
  + For Virginia residents see <https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/online-services/name-change>5

1. **Changing your name on your U.S. Passport**

* If you have a passport and plan to travel internationally in the near future, you may want to consider changing your name after Step 1 due to long processing times
* If you are submitting your documents by mail, this is where your additional certified copies of your marriage certificate will come in handy
* To determine what documents and forms are required based on your situation, visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/have-passport/change-correct.html>7

1. **Changing your name with your insurance, bank, school, etc.**

* **Insurance**
  + After updating your name with the DMV and SSA, you should inform your insurance companies (e.g., health, property, auto, life) of your name change
  + They may require that you submit a certified copy of your marriage certificate
* **Banks, Creditors, and Financial Institutions** 
  + You must inform your banks, any creditors, and any financial institutions where you hold an account when you legally change your name (e.g., credit cards, debit cards, checks, loans, mortgage)
  + You will likely be asked to provide a certified copy of the marriage certificate
  + You will need to inform the 3 credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) of your name change
    - Equifax
      * Name change: <https://www.equifax.com/personal/help/article-list/-/h/a/correct-dispute-information-credit-reports/>11
    - Experian
      * Name change: <https://www.experian.com/blogs/ask-experian/how-to-report-name-change-to-credit-bureau/>11
    - TransUnion
      * Name change: <https://www.transunion.com/customer-support/editing-personal-information?atvy=%7B%22261809%22%3A%22Experience+B%22%7D>11
* **School/university**
  + *For students/faculty/staff at JMU*
    - Students
      * Contact JMU’s [Office of the Registrar](https://www.jmu.edu/registrar/st_contact.shtml)13 to inform them of your name change
      * You will likely need a certified copy of your marriage certificate
      * See <https://www.jmu.edu/safezone/area.shtml>14 for a list of places where you may update your name through JMU
    - Faculty/staff
      * Contact JMU’s [Office of Human Resources](https://www.jmu.edu/humanresources/about/contact-us.shtml)13 to inform them of your name change
      * You will likely need a certified copy of your marriage certificate
      * See <https://www.jmu.edu/safezone/area.shtml>14 for a list of places where you may update your name through JMU
  + For students/staff at other schools/universities: contact your local school’s administrative office or your university’s registration office (or Human Resources for staff) for how to proceed with updating your legal name
    - You will likely be asked to provide a certified copy of the marriage certificate
* **Other Legal Documents** 
  + After you receive your marriage certificate, you should change your name in any legal documents in which you are named
  + These include your lease, wills, powers of attorney, advanced health directive, deeds, protective orders, restraining orders, etc., or such documents that name you as a party (e.g., if you are listed as a beneficiary)
  + Changing your name on these documents ensures that your rights and powers in the document remain intact
* Contact your [state's social services office](https://www.usa.gov/state-social-services)16 if you receive SNAP (food stamps), TANF (welfare), or other public assistance to notify them of your change
* If you receive veterans’ health care or benefits, [notify the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)](https://www.va.gov/resources/how-to-change-your-legal-name-on-file-with-va/)17 of your name change
* **Miscellaneous places to update your name (if applicable)**
  + Airline accounts
    - You may be able to file a name change online for a given airline or call their customer service for support to start this process
    - You will likely need a certified copy of your marriage certificate
  + Personal email address/profile name
  + Social media accounts
  + Mobile payment apps (e.g., Venmo, Cash App)
  + Apple ID/Android Google Account
  + Grocery store/shopping mobile apps (e.g., Amazon, eBay, Walmart)
  + Fast food mobile apps
  + Other mobile apps on your phone

1. **Changing your name with the Selective Service**

* **Individuals Assigned Female at Birth**
  + If you were assigned female at birth and currently identify as female, you do not have to register with the Selective Service. Skip to Step 7
  + If you were assigned female at birth, currently identify as male, AND have changed your name (e.g., due to marriage), see page 18 for more information
* **Individuals Assigned Male at Birth**
  + If you were assigned male at birth (regardless of current gender identity), you must register for the Selective Service if you are between the ages of 18 and 25
  + You may register online at <https://www.sss.gov/register/>19
  + If you have changed your name (e.g., due to marriage), you are obligated to inform the Selective Service. To notify the Selective Service of your name change, you must call to inform them and provide a copy of the marriage certificate and supporting documentation (Call: [847-688-6888](tel:847-688-6888) or toll-free: [888-655-1825](tel:888-655-1825))20

1. **Changing your name with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (if applicable)**

If you were born outside of the U.S. and have already been granted some form of permanent legal status in the United States, and you would like your new legal name reflected in your USCIS document(s), see below. You will need to complete [Form N-565 (PDF, 467.56 KB)](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/n-565.pdf)23, the Application for Replacement Naturalization/Citizenship Document. See <https://www.uscis.gov/n-565>23 for more information and instructions on filing online or by mail.

* **Please note**, if you are not a permanent resident of the United States and are in the country on a temporary basis, it is important to consult regulations specific to your immigration status and any sponsoring organization to ensure name changes do not cause issues with immigration. You will need to refer to the laws of your home country to begin the name change process.
* It is recommended that you do not attempt to travel internationally while going through the name change process so that you do not encounter issues with mismatching documentation (e.g., differing names on your driver’s license and passport).
* Per the USCIS website, “If you are applying for a new document because your name was changed, you must submit the original USCIS document and a copy of either the original or certified document establishing the name change (such as a marriage certificate, divorce decree, annulment decree, or court order), and complete Part 5. of [Form N-565](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/n-565.pdf).” 23
* See [Instructions for Form N-565 (PDF, 257.24 KB)](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/n-565instr.pdf)23 for more detailed information for the name change process

**Name Change by Divorce**

1. **Legally changing your name**

Required documentation and forms vary by your state and county of residence.

* You will need to file a [Name Change Pursuant to a Divorce form](https://www.rockinghamcountyva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/29/Name-Change---Divorce)26 with your local court. This form allows you to be restored to the use of your former name (i.e., before changing your name by marriage)
  + For residents of Rockingham County, VA (Rockingham County Circuit Court) see <https://www.rockinghamcountyva.gov/358/Divorce-Information-Forms>26
* After your name change is approved, you will need a certified copy of the divorce certificate to notify other entities of your name change
  + If you are notifying these entities of your name change in person, you may use the original divorce certificate given to you by the court
  + If you are submitting your name change by mail or online (and photocopies are not accepted), you can request additional certified copies as needed from the court that issued it (see Steps 2-7)

1. **Changing your name with the Social Security Administration**

* Visit the SSA website (<https://www.ssa.gov/personal-record/change-name>)27 and answer a few questions to determine what documents you will need and whether you will need to submit your name change request online, by mail, or in person at your local Social Security office
  + You will likely need the divorce certificate and a state-issued ID (e.g., driver’s license)
  + You may be able to start your application online and then visit your local Social Security office to complete this process
* After submitting your application to the SSA (whether in person, online, or by mail), you will receive a free replacement card in the mail
  + Most cards arrive 14 days after your application is approved

1. **Changing your name with the DMV**

Required documentation and forms vary by your state of residence.

* For Virginia residents see <https://dmv.virginia.gov/records/personal-information-updates>5
* Visit your state’s DMV website for the required documentation and forms needed to change your name on your driver’s license. You will need to:
  + [Start online](https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/online-services/name-change)5 or complete a [Driver's License and Identification Card Application](https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/forms/dl1p.pdf)5 requesting a name change
  + Visit a [DMV customer service center](https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/locations) and bring your divorce certificate (showing the change from married name to maiden name/surname at birth)
  + Bring your valid local state’s driver's license, learner's permit, or photo identification card, if you currently hold one
  + If you started applying online: Your confirmation email
  + For Virginia residents see <https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/online-services/name-change>5

1. **Changing your name on your U.S. Passport**

* If you have a passport and plan to travel internationally in the near future, you may want to consider changing your name after Step 1 due to long processing times
* If you are submitting your documents by mail, this is where your additional certified copies of your divorce certificate will come in handy
* To determine what documents and forms are required based on your situation, visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/have-passport/change-correct.html>7

1. **Changing your name with your insurance, bank, school, etc.**

* **Insurance**
  + You should inform your insurance companies (e.g., health, property, auto, life) immediately after you receive your divorce certificate with your new name
  + They may require that you submit a certified copy of your divorce certificate for a name change
* **Banks, Creditors, and Financial Institutions** 
  + You must inform your banks, any creditors, and any financial institutions where you hold an account when you legally change your name (e.g., credit cards, debit cards, checks, loans, mortgage)
  + You will likely be asked to provide a certified copy your divorce certificate for a name change
  + You will need to inform the 3 credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) of your name change
    - Equifax
      * Name change: <https://www.equifax.com/personal/help/article-list/-/h/a/correct-dispute-information-credit-reports/>11
    - Experian
      * Name change: <https://www.experian.com/blogs/ask-experian/how-to-report-name-change-to-credit-bureau/>11
    - TransUnion
      * Name change: <https://www.transunion.com/customer-support/editing-personal-information?atvy=%7B%22261809%22%3A%22Experience+B%22%7D>11
* **School/university**
  + *For students/faculty/staff at JMU*
    - Students
      * Contact JMU’s [Office of the Registrar](https://www.jmu.edu/registrar/st_contact.shtml)13 to inform them of your name change
      * You will likely need a certified copy of your divorce certificate (showing the change from married name to maiden name/surname at birth)
      * See <https://www.jmu.edu/safezone/area.shtml>14 for a list of places where you may update your name through JMU
    - Faculty/staff
      * Contact JMU’s [Office of Human Resources](https://www.jmu.edu/humanresources/about/contact-us.shtml)13 to inform them of your name change
      * You will likely need a certified copy of your divorce certificate (showing the change from married name to maiden name/surname at birth)
      * See <https://www.jmu.edu/safezone/area.shtml>14 for a list of places where you may update your name through JMU
  + For students/staff at other schools/universities: contact your local school’s administrative office or your university’s registration office (or Human Resources for staff) for how to proceed with updating your legal name
    - You will likely need a certified copy of your divorce certificate (showing the change from married name to maiden name/surname at birth)
* **Other Legal Documents** 
  + After you receive your divorce certificate, you should change your name in any legal documents in which you are named
  + These include your lease, wills, powers of attorney, advanced health directive, deeds, protective orders, restraining orders, etc., or such documents that name you as a party (e.g., if you are listed as a beneficiary)
  + Changing your name on these documents ensures that your rights and powers in the document remain intact
* Contact your [state's social services office](https://www.usa.gov/state-social-services)16 if you receive SNAP (food stamps), TANF (welfare), or other public assistance
* If you receive veterans’ health care or benefits, [notify the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)](https://www.va.gov/resources/how-to-change-your-legal-name-on-file-with-va/) 17
* **Miscellaneous places to update your name**
  + Airline accounts
    - You may be able to file a name change online for a given airline or call their customer service for support to start this process
    - You will likely need a certified copy of your divorce certificate (showing the change from married name to maiden name/surname at birth)
  + Personal email address/profile name
  + Social media accounts
  + Mobile payment apps (e.g., Venmo, Cash App)
  + Apple ID/Android Google Account
  + Grocery store/shopping mobile apps (e.g., Amazon, eBay, Walmart)
  + Fast food mobile apps
  + Other mobile apps on your phone

1. **Changing your name with the Selective Service**

* **Individuals Assigned Female at Birth**
  + If you were assigned female at birth and currently identify as female, you do not have to register with the Selective Service. Skip to Step 7
  + If you were assigned female at birth, currently identify as male, AND have changed your name (e.g., due to divorce), see page 18 for more information
* **Individuals Assigned Male at Birth**
  + If you were assigned male at birth (regardless of current gender identity), you must register for the Selective Service if you are between the ages of 18 and 25
  + You may register online at <https://www.sss.gov/register/>19
  + If you have changed your name (e.g., due to divorce), you are obligated to inform the Selective Service. To notify the Selective Service of your name change, you must call to inform them and provide a copy of the divorce certificate and supporting documentation (Call: [847-688-6888](tel:847-688-6888) or toll-free: [888-655-1825](tel:888-655-1825))20

1. **Changing your name with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (if applicable)**

If you were born outside of the U.S. and have already been granted some form of permanent legal status in the United States, and you would like your new legal name reflected in your USCIS document(s), see below. You will need to complete [Form N-565 (PDF, 467.56 KB)](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/n-565.pdf)23, the Application for Replacement Naturalization/Citizenship Document. See <https://www.uscis.gov/n-565>23 for more information and instructions on filing online or by mail.

* **Please note**, if you are not a permanent resident of the United States and are in the country on a temporary basis, it is important to consult regulations specific to your immigration status and any sponsoring organization to ensure name changes do not cause issues with immigration. You will need to refer to the laws of your home country to begin the name change process.
* It is recommended that you do not attempt to travel internationally while going through the name change process so that you do not encounter issues with mismatching documentation (e.g., differing names on your driver’s license and passport)
* Per the USCIS website, “If you are applying for a new document because your name was changed, you must submit the original USCIS document and a copy of either the original or certified document establishing the name change (such as a marriage certificate, divorce decree, annulment decree, or court order), and complete Part 5. of [Form N-565](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/n-565.pdf).” 23
* See [Instructions for Form N-565 (PDF, 257.24 KB)](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/n-565instr.pdf)23 for more detailed information for the name change process

**Additional Important Information**

**Social Security and Filing Taxes with the IRS:**

* Make sure that the name shown on your Social Security card matches the name you use on your tax return
* **For court order:** your new legal name must be updated with the SSA and reflected on your Social Security card (see Social Security section above). Make sure to inform any employers/banks/universities/other entities which provide documents for filing your taxes (e.g., W-2, Form 1099, Form 1098-T) of your name change so that they have your new legal name reflected in your tax documents
  + If your former name appears on your tax documents from your employer/bank/university/etc., you will need to contact them to correct your name with the SSA and submit a corrected form with your tax return (see <https://www.irs.gov/faqs/irs-procedures/name-changes-social-security-number-matching-issues>28 for more information)
* **For marriage/divorce:** If you haven’t changed your name with the SSA, you'll need to show your former name on the tax return instead of your married name to avoid delays
  + If you have changed your name with the SSA, make sure that the name on your Social Security card and tax documents from your employer/bank/university/etc. match
  + If your former name appears on your tax documents from your employer/bank/university/etc., you will need to contact them to correct your name with the SSA and submit a corrected form with your tax return (see <https://www.irs.gov/faqs/irs-procedures/name-changes-social-security-number-matching-issues>28 for more information)

**Voter Registration:**

* Your state voter registration should be automatically updated with your new legal name by the DMV when you apply for a driver’s license following your name change (provided you consent to this during your DMV visit or online application)
* If you would like to check that your new legal name is reflected in your state voter registration, see <https://vote.gov/register> and select your state of residence
  + Per the vote.gov website: “Submit your changes before your state’s registration deadline. The registration deadline for your state can be as early as 30 days before Election Day for a local, state, or national election. Your state may also require you to provide an updated driver’s license or ID card when you register.”
* **For Virginia residents**, see <https://vote.gov/register/virginia> for your options
  + Click [confirm your voter registration status](https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation/Lookup/status) to verify that your new legal name is reflected in your state voter registration
  + If your former name is listed, consider the following options:
    - Contact the [Virginia Department of Elections](https://www.elections.virginia.gov/index.html) at 1-800-552-9745 (TTY 711) to inquire about the status of your application OR
    - Click [Start or update your registration online](https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/Registration/DmvLookup) to update your new legal name directly with the Virginia Department of Elections
  + Per the vote.gov website, Virginia’s voter registration deadlines are as follows:
    - Online registration deadline: 22 days before Election Day
    - Register by mail deadline: Must be postmarked 22 days before Election Day
    - In person registration deadline: Available up to and including on Election Day

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s)**

**General FAQ’s**

* **What is the age of majority and why does it matter if I want to change my name and/or gender marker?**
  + The age of majority is the age at which a person is legally considered an adult and can assume legal responsibility. In most U.S. states, the age of majority is 18 years old. However, it varies by state (i.e., 18 to 21 years old). Persons younger than this age are considered minors and must be under the care of a parent or guardian unless they are emancipated.
  + If you have not yet reached the age of majority in your state of residence (to complete most of the steps above) or state of birth (if you would like to make changes to your birth certificate), a parent or legal guardian will be required to assist you in this process (unless you are emancipated or pursue emancipation).
  + You can find out the age of majority in your state of residence or state of birth (if applicable) by Googling “age of majority in [state]”

**Name change by court order**

* **How much will it cost to change my name and update all of my important documents?**
  + The cost to update each of your important documents and government-issued forms of identification will vary by state/county. See <https://translifeline.org/resources/id-change-library/>29 for a breakdown of cost by state and county for each type of documentation (e.g., passport, driver’s license)
  + Updating your Social Security card is free, regardless of state
* **How long do I have to wait for my name change to be approved?**
  + The timeline varies greatly by state/county and changes with time of year (i.e., based on how busy they are). It could be as fast as a few business days (e.g., for residents of Rockingham County, VA) to a few weeks.
* **How will I know my name change has been approved?**
  + You will find out that your name change has been approved when you receive the document in the mail (unless this process varies for your specific state/county).
  + If you are scheduled for a court hearing regarding your name change (you will likely be notified of this by mail), you will find out if your name change has been approved during your court hearing and will receive the document immediately following the hearing.
* **How likely is it that I will be scheduled for a court hearing regarding my name change?**
  + The process for whether a court hearing is scheduled (vs. approving the name change without a court hearing) varies by state/county.
  + If you are scheduled for a court hearing, do not worry! This is typically just a formality and will likely be a very quick proceeding where you swear under oath that you are not changing your name for any fraudulent purpose or if it will infringe upon the rights of another.
* **What do I say if I am scheduled for a court hearing regarding my name change?**
  + Typically, the judge will ask you to swear under oath that you are not changing your name for any fraudulent purpose or if it will infringe upon the rights of another.
  + The judge will also ask you the reason for your name change.
  + A short, 1-2 sentence response is usually fine. Again, this proceeding is typically just a formality.
  + If you had to give a reason for your name change on the request for name change document you filed, you may want to give the same answer.
* Depending on the political climate in your state/county, the reason for your name change, and your level of comfort, you may choose to use one of the sample phrases below:
  + - “I would like to change my name to better align with my gender identity”
    - “For gender affirmation”
    - “I identify as xyz (gender identity) and would like to change my name to reflect what I use in my daily life”
    - “I would like to change my name to reflect what I use in my daily life”
    - “I go by xyz (name) and would like my legal name to match”
    - “To match my preferred name”
* **Do I need certified copies of my court order for change of name?** 
  + If you plan to (or are required to) mail proof of name change (e.g., to update your passport or birth certificate), you will need additional certified copies of your court order for change of name
    - You should request at least 2 additional certified copies to notify other entities of your name change
  + If you only plan to notify other entities of your name change in person or by submitting photocopies (if accepted) online, you do not need additional certified copies
* **What happens if I did not request enough certified copies of my court order for change of name and now I need more?**
  + Simply return to the court where you submitted your request for the name change and request additional certified copies
* **I am not yet ready to or able to legally change my name and/or gender maker. What are my options?**
  + JMU has the option for you to use a chosen name and preferred pronouns
  + Per JMU’s website: “The Chosen Name Project allows students, faculty, and staff to select a Chosen Name in [MyMadison](https://mymadison.jmu.edu/" \t "_parent" \o "MyMadison Login Page), which will display instead of their legal name in an increasing number of JMU systems. Legal names will continue to be used whenever required by University Policy, State or Federal Law, and in systems not included in this project.”
  + See <https://www.jmu.edu/computing/accounts-and-access/chosen-name.shtml>15 for more information on designating a chosen name through JMU
  + See <https://www.jmu.edu/safezone/area.shtml>14 for a list of places where you may update your name and/or gender marker/pronouns through JMU
* **I am a student, faculty, or staff member at JMU and identify as a part of the LGBTQIA+ community. What resources are available to me?**
  + Go to JMU’s Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Expression (SOGIE) website (<https://www.jmu.edu/studentaffairs/departments/accessibility-and-belonging/sogie/index.shtml>) and navigate to the Resources tab
    - Resources for trans-identifying individuals can be found at <https://www.jmu.edu/studentaffairs/departments/accessibility-and-belonging/sogie/trans-at-jmu.shtml> or Google “trans at JMU”