

11/01/22 Update: Access to Birth Records Prior to

**Adoption Important Note:**

- RVRS maintains birth records for persons born in Massachusetts from 1931 to the present only.
  - RVRS does not have birth records for any person (adoptee) born outside of Massachusetts. If you were born in another state that allows adoptees to access prior birth records, contact the registry for vital records in that state.
  - For births prior to 1931, contact the [Massachusetts State Archives](#).
- Section 4 of Chapter 109 of the Acts of 2007, which provides for an Adoption Contact Information Registry, remains subject to appropriations. At present, funds have not been appropriated to set up the Adoption Contact Information Registry. Please continue to check this web site for additional updates.

**Who May Apply?**

Beginning November 3, 2022, individuals listed below may apply to RVRS for a copy of a birth record established prior to an adoption (without first obtaining a court order).

- An adult adoptee (18 years or older) who was born in Massachusetts.
- An adult child (18 years or older) of a deceased parent who was an adoptee born in Massachusetts.
- The parent or legal guardian of a child (under 18 years of age) whose deceased parent was an adoptee born in Massachusetts.
- The adoptive parent of a child (under 18 years of age) born in Massachusetts.

By state law, all other persons must provide RVRS with a certified copy of a court order from the Massachusetts Probate and Family Court where the adoption was granted, or, for out-of-state adoptions, the Massachusetts Probate and Family Court in the county in which the adoptee was born, directing RVRS to release the information contained in the birth record prior to adoption. M.G.L. c.46 s. 13(h).

**How do I apply for a copy of my pre-adoption birth record?**

Complete the Application for a Non-certified Record of Birth Prior to Adoption.

Only completed applications will be processed. Applications will be processed in the order that they are received. Applications may be submitted by mail or in person at the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics. You may **not** order via phone, FAX or Internet, as these records have special identification and processing requirements.

#### Submitting your application by mail

RVRS will accept applications by mail. In addition to providing copies of all necessary identification and other documentation (as described in the section below), you must have your application notarized. Your application will then be processed in the order it was received. Please complete your application carefully, as incomplete applications will be returned and your new application will be processed in the order the new application is received.

#### Submitting your application in person

RVRS will accept and process applications by walk-in customers. Your application will be reviewed for completeness, your identification and documentation will be checked, and payment will be taken. In most cases, when the record can be located without difficulty, you will be able to receive your record while you wait.

#### Viewing a record at the RVRS Research Room

Eligible individuals may view records in the RVRS research room. An application must be completed to verify your identification and documentation prior to receiving the record to view. More information about the research room and hours may be found at this link: [RVRS Research Room](#).

#### Fees

- By mail: \$32.00
- In person at RVRS: \$20.00
- Research room: \$9.00/hour.

The Bayside Office Center rate for parking is \$2.00 per hour up to a maximum of \$6.00.

Checks and money orders should be made payable to the "Commonwealth of Massachusetts." Please do not send cash by mail. Credit/debit cards are not accepted.

#### **What will I receive?**

Upon receipt of a completed application and payment of the appropriate fee, RVRS will search its files. If a birth record prior to adoption is located, you will be mailed via certified mail return receipt, a copy of that birth record which lists among other items, the

legal parent or parents listed on the record at the time of birth. In a very few cases, there may have been an amendment prior to the adoption, in which case you will receive the initial record and any relevant amendments (e.g., paternity establishment).

The copy will be made on security paper to deter potential fraudulent use, and will contain the following statement mandated by state law: "The contents of this birth record are being released under section 2B of chapter 46 of the Massachusetts General Laws or under a court order. This record was amended by adoption. This is not a certified copy of a birth record."

### **Refunds**

If the application can not be processed for any reason, it will be returned to you with a refund.

If you do not sign for the record that is sent to you by certified mail, and the record is returned to RVRS, you will NOT be issued a refund, as the cost has already been incurred.

### **Identification Requirements**

The following identification and documentation is required for all requests for inspection or copies of records released under section 2B of chapter 46 of the Massachusetts General Laws. If you are applying in person, you will need to show the following materials for validation of your identity; and if you are applying by mail, you will need to attach the documentation as described below.

1. If you are applying for your OWN record:

▪ **A current government-issued photo ID:**

- Current, not expired, driver's license, or
- Current, not expired, other ID issued by your state's department of motor vehicles, or
- Current, not expired, passport

*If you cannot provide one of the identification items listed above, please call RVRS to be certain the ID you plan to provide is adequate.*

For applications by mail, attach a photocopy of one of the IDs specified above.

▪ **Documentation of a change of name.** If the name on your ID is different from your name established at the time of your adoption, you must provide documentation that will prove you are the person listed on the birth record. For example:

- If your ID shows a **married name**, provide a certified copy of your marriage certificate that shows your name as it appears on your current (adoptive) birth certificate and your name after marriage and as it appears on your ID.
- If your ID reflects a **legal change of name**, provide a certified copy of your legal change of name decree that shows your name as it appears on your current

(adoptive) birth certificate and your legal name as decreed by a court and as appears on your ID.

If you are uncertain as to whether your documentation is adequate, please contact the Registry for prior approval.

For applications by mail, attach an original certified copy of the requested documentation. Your original documents will be returned to you with the completed order.

2. If you are applying for YOUR PARENT'S record:

You must provide the identification listed above in numbered section 1, AND also show or provide:

- **A certified copy of your parent's death record.** If you are applying by mail, attach an original certified copy of your parent's death record.
- **A certified copy of your birth record** that shows you are the decedent's child. If you are applying by mail, attach an original certified copy of your parent's death record.
- **Documentation of any change of name.** If your parent's death certificate does not contain in some format a reference to his or her name at the time of adoption (e.g., maiden name, or name at birth or adoption), then you will need to provide evidence of the change of name as described above in numbered section 1.

3. If you are applying for YOUR ADOPTED CHILD'S record:

You must provide the identification listed above in numbered section 1.

**Notarized statement.**

For all requests made by mail, the applicant must sign and date the application in the presence of a notary who will certify that your signature is authentic.