

## New Legislation

**Original birth certificates:** If you are an adult adoptee who can identify the names of the parents listed on your original birth certificate, you may be eligible to receive a plain-paper copy of it. An application to request the original birth certificate is located on the Vital Statistics (VS) web page: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/vs>, (**under adoption**) or contact us at 1/888/963-7111 if you would like one mailed.

## Adoption Information

**Adoption records** are confidential. The court, child-placing agency and VS have various records relating to the adoptee.

**Court:** The clerk who represents the adopting court often has copies of all documents submitted during the adoption process. An individual may petition this court to unseal these records. If the petitioner presents good cause to the presiding judge, the judge may order the record open.

**Child-Placing Agencies:** A licensed child-placing agency maintains a file on each child it places for adoption. The adult adoptee and the adoptive parents are eligible to receive de-identified copies or summarized descriptions about the birth family. If the adoptee does not know the name of the agency, then he/she may wish to contact the Central Adoption Registry (see below).

**Vital Statistics (VS):** If an adoptee was born in Texas, VS typically has the original birth certificate and a certificate of adoption that amends the original birth information with the adoptive information. If the adult adoptee cannot identify the birth parents on the original birth certificate (see New Legislation above) then the adoptee may wish to apply to the Central Adoption Registry. At the same time, the adoptee may wish to request the identity of the original adopting court to

petition for the release or unsealing of the record.

**International Adoptions:** Texas residents who have adopted a child internationally in that child's home country can request a Texas-issued foreign-born birth certificate by registering the foreign adoption in the county where the adoptive parents reside.

## Medical/Social Information

Vital Statistics (VS) provides medical and social information to adoptees and other eligible persons via two types of records: the **Health, Social, Education and Genetic History** report (HSEGH) and out-of-business **child-placing agency records**.

- In 1984, Texas started collecting medical and social information on birth families if the child was being privately placed without the aid of an agency. Adult adoptees, adoptive parents and other qualified persons may obtain non-identified information from these reports.
- If one was placed for adoption by a child-placing agency, the agency is responsible for issuing non-identifying information from the HSEGH and other records concerning the birth family.
- Years after the adoption, the birth family may wish to provide current social, medical and genetic history relevant to the health and well-being of the adoptee. Once received, VS will attempt to locate the adoptive parents and inform them of the information. If the adoption occurred through an existing child-placing agency, the birth family must contact that agency.
- The Central Adoption Registry (CAR) Unit maintains many, but not all, adoption records from child-placing agencies that have ceased operation. Adult adoptees and their adoptive parents may obtain social and medical history from those records.

## Central Adoption Registry (CAR)

The purpose of the Central Adoption Registry is to reunite adult adoptees with birth parents or siblings who register looking for them. The registry is unique in that it has the authority, without a court order, to view a sealed file or confidential record. Since VS houses the original birth certificate, guesswork is rarely involved in determining the biological relationship. Identifying information is released when all parties involved complete the following:

1. Attend a one-hour post-adoption counseling session to help educate and prepare one for a reunion.
2. Prepare an autobiography with photographs. The registry exchanges the biographies at the same time it releases identifying information.



## Central Adoption Registry Requirements

- A person must be adopted in Texas, or be born in Texas and adopted in another state; or
- Be the birth parent or sibling of the adoptee; and
- Be 18 years of age or older.
- Provide proof of age and identity (copy of birth certificate and a valid government-issued photo ID).
- \$30 check or money order, payable to DSHS.

To receive an application, call or write the Central Adoption Registry (CAR) at:

VSU-CAR (MC 2096)  
POB 149347  
Austin, TX 78714-9347  
512/776-7388 or  
Toll Free: 1/888/963-7111 x7388

Or, Visit the Texas Department of State Health Services  
Vital Statistics web site to print an application:

<http://www.DSHS.state.tx.us/vs>

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Texas Department of  
State Health Services  
Vital Statistics