

## **YOUR BABY'S BIRTH CERTIFICATE What You Need to Know**

Congratulations! You are about to name your new baby and give us important information for your child's birth certificate. You have probably been thinking about a name for months, but do you realize how important the *other* information on a birth certificate is?

The birth certificate is a legal document that will prove your child's identity, age, parents, and U.S. citizenship. This document will be used by your child throughout his/her life. For example, a birth certificate will be needed by your child to enter school, play sports, apply for a driver's license, and get a passport. For this reason, it is very important that the information you give us now about your baby, yourself and your baby's father be *complete* and *correct*.

But, birth certificates have other important uses, too. Medical information provided by doctors on birth certificates is studied to learn the best ways of keeping expectant mothers and newborns healthy. For example, studying birth certificates helped doctors learn that smoking in pregnancy can cause lower birth weight babies, and that taking folic acid during pregnancy can reduce some serious birth defects. We also use birth certificates to count the number of births in each state and in the U.S. each year, and to gather statistics about those births. Birth statistics are used by health and medical researchers to study and improve the health of mothers and newborn infants and tell us where to provide programs and services for mothers and babies. Items such as parent's education, race, and smoking will be used for studies but will not appear on copies of the birth certificate issued to you or your child.

State laws provide protection against the unauthorized release of identifying information from the birth certificates to ensure the confidentiality of the parents and their child. The Center for Records and Statistics is always working to make sure the information you provide is protected. The Center for Records & Statistics will record your baby's birth certificate and is responsible for keeping each birth certificate safe, secure and private. If you need to make any changes to your baby's birth record, we will make sure the changes are correctly recorded. The Center for Records and Statistics will issue certified copies of the birth certificate *only* to those who are authorized under the law to request them. And, they will make sure that birth certificate information used for research does not include any personal information about you, your baby or your baby's father.

You can also help to keep your child's birth certificate safe and secure by following these simple rules:

- Never sign a blank birth certificate worksheet.
- Always check over the information you have filled out to make sure it is *complete* and *correct* before you sign.
- When you receive an official copy of the birth record, check it immediately to see that it is complete and correct. Make any corrections as soon as possible and return the corrections to the Louisiana Center for Records and Statistics at the address listed below.
- Keep any certified copies of the birth certificate in a safe place.
- Make sure any certified copies that are sent by mail for official purposes (such as applying for a passport) are returned to you.
- Never give anyone else your child's birth certificate for any purpose.
- Never alter anything on a certified copy of a birth certificate.

If you have any questions about your baby's birth certificate, please contact us as shown below.

*We thank you for providing this important information.*

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