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# **COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA**

## **NAME CHANGE**

### **FAMILY PACKET**

**Control Number - PA-NAME-3**

This packet contains the following:

1. Instructions;
2. Forms List; and
3. Access to Pennsylvania Law Summary.

## **I. EXPLANATION OF PETITION FOR CHANGE OF NAME**

- A. In Pennsylvania, an action for a court ordered Change of Name begins with the filing of a Petition in the Court of Common Pleas in the county in which the Petitioner resides. The Petition must contain certain information. The forms in this packet include the necessary information for a Family Name Change in the State of Pennsylvania.
- B. You can use this packet if:
  - ▶ You are a resident in the county in which you will file.
  - ▶ You have proper and reasonable cause for the requested change of name.
  - ▶ You are not changing your name to avoid debts or defraud creditors.

## **II. WHAT FORMS ARE INCLUDED**

- A. Civil Cover Sheet - (PA-NC-100) This document provides the court with certain necessary information.
- B. Verified Petition for Change of Name - (PA-NC-301) This document states the reasons and other required details for your name change.
- C. Notice of Filing - (PA-NC-302) Notice to the public that your Petition has been filed and the matter has been set for hearing. This should be published in the newspaper prior to the hearing as directed in the Order of Publication.
- D. Order for Hearing - (PA-NC-303) This document officially sets the matter for hearing.
- E. Order for Publication - (PA-NC-304) This document officially orders publication.
- F. Decree for Change of Name - (PA-NC-305) This is the final statement of the legalities and terms of your name change. Once this form is signed by the Judge and filed with the court, the name change is effective.
- G. Proof of Publication - (PA-NC-306) An affidavit affirming that the Notice of Filing was published as ordered on the date(s) specified.
- H. Certification of Recorder of Deeds - (PA-NC-307) This form is certification of a name search of the records of the recorder of deeds in the county in which you reside for instruments of obligation such as mortgages and liens.
- I. Certification of the Prothonotary - (PA-NC-308) This form is certification of a name search of the records of the Prothonotary of the county in which you reside for instruments of obligation such as mortgages and liens.
- J. Certification of the Clerk of Courts (PA-NC-309) This form is certification of a name search of the records of the recorder of deeds in the county in which you reside for instruments of obligation and records of actions filed.

If you did not order a completion package and need access to the download page again for any of the above forms, please check your email for a link to that will redisplay the page for you.

### **III. PROCEDURE FOR CHANGE OF NAME (FAMILY) FOR THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA**

#### **A. Preliminary Note:**

1. The attached forms may be completed by:
  - a. Printing the forms and completing by hand. Use black ink and print neatly.
  - b. Printing the forms and completing using a typewriter.
  - c. By completing the forms on your computer using a word processing program and then printing the forms.
2. Use complete names and not initials. Check your spelling carefully, a misspelled word can delay your name change.
3. Print three (3) complete sets of forms.
4. All forms with a heading - the name of the court, the Petitioners' name, the case number, and the name of the document - require that the heading be completed. You will need to add the name of the court and the full name of the Petitioners. The "Action/Cause No." will be assigned by the court clerk at the time of filing.
5. Forms that require your signature and include a notary block **MUST** be signed in the presence of the notary or court clerk who will complete the acknowledgement. Use your complete name - first name, middle name, last name.
6. When a form is filed with the court, request the clerk "file-stamp" one copy of the form for your file.
7. A Law Summary is available and can be printed for your State. To do so, see the last page of this package. Please review the law summary before beginning the process of completing the forms.

#### **B. Procedure**

- Step 1: Complete all the forms using complete names - middle names instead of middle initials.
- Step 2: File the Civil Cover Sheet, the Verified Petition for Change of Name in the Court of Common Pleas in the county in which you reside and pay the appropriate fee.

Step 3: Adults must provide a set of fingerprints to the court. The fingerprints and a copy of the Petition are then forwarded by the Court to the State Police who do a records check. Since this is a Family Petition and the names of the minors are being changed based on the change of name of a parent, a fingerprint card of a minor 12 and over must be submitted. You must present to the Court a set of fingerprints which will be sent to the Pennsylvania State Police for a determination of name change eligibility which will be returned within sixty (60) days of receipt of the material.

Fingerprints are taken at the offices of the Pennsylvania State Police. You will need to contact a local office and determine where and when you can have your fingerprints taken for submission with the Petition for Change of Name. The fingerprint card can be obtained at the office of the State Police.

Step 4: After filing the Clerk will advise you how to have the Order for Publication, Order for Hearing and Notice filed. Follow the directions of the Clerk.

Step 5: Publish the notice of name change as directed by the Court in a paper approved by the Court. After publication, obtain a proof of publication and file with the Clerk on or before the hearing date.

Step 6: Appear as directed by the Clerk and present the Proposed Order to Change Name to the Court. At the hearing, any persons objecting to the requested Name Change will be heard by the Court; and the Court may examine, upon oath, the Petitioner(s) or other persons concerning the Petition.

Step 7: Obtain a certified copy of the Order from the Clerk after it has been signed by the Judge. You are now ready to notify appropriate persons and governmental agencies of the change. The following is a list of items for your consideration:

- Driver's license or state issued I.D..
- Social Security registration.
- Voter's registration.
- State and federal tax authorities.
- Insurance companies.
- Social service or other entitlement programs.
- Change car titles and notify your insurance company.

- Bank and other institutions where you have loans, checking accounts and savings.
- Credit card accounts and other charge accounts.
- Update records at school and university.
- If the minor is of draft age, the registration office should be informed of your new name.
- Military benefits, if the minor has such rights.
- Doctor's office, dentist, pharmacy and hospital may need to amend their records so your future insurance claims can be properly processed with your insurance carrier.
- Postmaster and mail carrier.
- Passport Office can be notified by submitting a Passport Amendment Form. See Passport agent for details.

#### NAME CHANGE CERTIFICATIONS\*\*\*

As a General Rule, the Petitioner will be required to submit name change certifications from the Clerk of Courts, Prothonotary and Recorder of Deeds. In the following counties the required certification of records is different:

(1) Delaware County: Certifications will be required from the Office of Judicial Support (combines offices of the Clerk of Courts and Prothonotary) and Recorder of Deeds.

(2) Erie County: Has an Office of the Clerk of Records with 4 divisions: (Prothonotary (civil); Clerk of Courts (Criminal); Recorder of Deeds; and, Register of Wills and Clerk of the Orphans' Court. Erie County Name Change Petitioner's will still need certifications from the Recorder of Deeds, Clerk of Courts and Prothonotary.

(3) Lackawana County: Has the Office of Judicial Records that combines the duties of the prothonotary and the clerk of courts. Name Change petitioners will need certification of the Office of Judicial Records and the Recorder of Deeds.

(4) Lehigh County: A Name Change Certification must be obtained from the Recorder of Deeds (Government Center Room 350) concerning the existence of any recorded mortgages. You will be required to bring this Certification to your hearing. No other certifications are required.

(5) Northampton County: The Department of Court Services is organized into the following divisions: Clerk of Courts, Criminal Division, Clerk of Courts, Civil Division (Prothonotary), Recorder of Deeds, Register of Wills and Clerk of Courts, Orphans' Court Division.

### **NOTE ABOUT COMPLETING THE FORMS**

The forms in this packet contain “form fields” created using Microsoft Word. “Form fields” facilitate completion of the forms using your computer. They do not limit your ability to print the form “in blank” and complete with a typewriter or by hand.

If you do not see the gray shaded form fields, go to the View menu, click on Toolbars, and then select Forms. This will open the forms toolbar. Look for the button on the forms toolbar that resembles a shaded letter “a”. Click in this button and the form fields will be visible.

The forms are locked which means that the content of the forms cannot be changed. You can only fill in the information in the fields.

If you need to make any changes in the body of the form, it is necessary for you “unlock” or “unprotect” the form. **IF YOU INTEND TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE CONTENT, DO SO BEFORE YOU BEGIN TO FILL IN THE FIELDS. IF YOU UNLOCK THE DOCUMENT AFTER YOU HAVE BEGUN TO COMPLETE THE FIELDS, WHEN YOU RELOCK, ALL INFORMATION YOU ENTERED WILL BE LOST.** To unlock click on “Tools” in the Menu bar and then selecting “unprotect document”. You may then be prompted to enter a password. If so, the password is “uslf”. That is uslf **in lower case letters without the quotation marks**. After you make the changes relock the document before you begin to complete the fields.

After any required changes and re-protecting the document, click on the first form field and enter the required information. You will be able to navigate through the document from form field to form field using your tab key. Tab to a form field and insert your data. If problems, please let us know.

## **LAW SUMMARY**

The law summary for this package may be located and printed from the following address:

<http://www.uslegalforms.com/pa/PA-NAME-3.htm>

## **DISCLAIMER**

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