

Massachusetts-Specific Name and Gender Marker Changes Quick-Guide

This guide accompanies the more detailed ID Documents Center of the National Center for Transgender Equality found [hereⁱ](#), and the Transgender Law Center's Quick Guide to Changing Federal Identity Documents found [hereⁱⁱ](#). These links can be used by people in any state, and by people who are not U.S. citizens. Forms and another quick-guide for Massachusetts are also available on the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition website [hereⁱⁱⁱ](#).

The Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund's Name Change Project provides free legal name change services to low-income trans and non-binary individuals who meet their eligibility guidelines. For more information on this program and eligibility, see their website [here^{iv}](#).

New England Law Boston's Identity Affirmation Project assists trans and gender diverse individuals with the name change process in Massachusetts. Visit their website [here^v](#) to learn more.

For more legal guidance, Ropes & Gray LLP and Goodwin have partnered with GLAD and MTPC on the Pop-Up Transgender ID Project. For more information, help, or advice, visit their website [here^{vi}](#).

1. **Name Change.** Anyone can petition for a change of name for any reason except to get out of debts or legal obligations. Name changes are made through a person's county probate court. To change your name as an adult, you will need to file the documents below with your [local MA probate court^{vii}](#).
 - a. [Petition to Change Name of Adult \(CJP 27\)^{viii}](#)
 - b. A certified copy of your birth certificate (long-form). This is available from the [Registry of Vital Records^{ix}](#) or from the city or town where you were born. Birth certificates that are not written in English must include a written translation signed by the person translating the birth certificate with a statement that they are fluent in the language and English, and that the translation is a true and accurate translation. The translator's signature must be notarized.
 - c. If you have changed your name in the past, you must file the certified document showing that name change for each time your name changed. Examples of this are a marriage certificate, Judgment of Divorce, or other court decree of name change.
 - d. A [Court Activity Record Information \(CARI\) and Warrant Management System Release Request Form \(CJP 34\)^x](#).

It costs between \$150 and \$500 to change one's name. It may be possible to petition for support or removal of these fees. Please see the notes below about the Affidavit of Indigency. A name change takes different amounts of time depending on what

jurisdiction a person lives in. Some counties require that you publish a copy of your name change in a local newspaper, which means that there will be a searchable, public record of your name change. You can file a motion to waive the publication. You can read more information about Massachusetts Name Changes [here](#)^{xi}.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts also recognizes a common law name change. This means that if a person adopts a name and uses it consistently, this can become a legal name through common law. This type of name change can be challenging to navigate updating documents like social security or state IDs because there is no formal documentation, but it can be helpful at school or work.

2. **Social Security Name and/or Gender Change.** We recommend people get a court ordered namechange first, then take both the certified copy of your court ordered change of name and a medical provider’s gender change certification letter to Social Security. This will allow a person to change their name and gender marker at the same time.
 - a. Social security gender marker change requires a certification letter from a medical provider. Fenway providers have this letter template available to them at each site. Contact your medical team case manager to request this letter.
 - b. After changing information with Social Security, wait 24-48 hours. The government computer system needs 24-48 hours to update all records within it. Waiting will help the process go more smoothly at the RMV. After the system updates with the change made at Social Security, the federal record and the requested changes to one’s license/ID will match.

3. **DMV/RMV/State License Name and/or Gender Marker Change.** *(This information is for MA residents.)* Go to the MA RMV with the certified copy of your court ordered change of name, proof of address, your Social Security Card with your new legal name change, and the [MA RMV’s Application](#)^{xii} for a state license/ID. Request a new license/ID and photo if needed at this time. *(We do not have forms or information for what is needed for other states. You must find out what is neeyour pt ded in your state before contacting us for help to change out-of-state licenses. See above for resources for documents originating outside of Massachusetts.)*

4. **Passport Name and/or Gender Marker Change.** Please refer to the [Department of State](#)^{xiii} for information and forms for passport changes.
 - a. You can self-select the gender marker that you would like to have on your passport as either Male or Female. The gender marker on your passport does not need to match the gender marker on any other identity document.
 - b. If you are changing your name and gender marker on your passport, you should wait until you have a certified copy of your name change before submitting an application.

5. **Birth Certificate Name and/or Sex Designation Change.** Most jurisdictions allow a change of name on birth certificates. However, not all states or countries allow people to change their sex designation regardless of medical or surgical gender affirmation treatments.
 - a. Changing the sex designation on a MA birth certificate requires that a medical provider complete a state form ***that must be notarized***. The form is available [here](#)^{xiv}. Contact your medical team case manager to request this form be completed and notarized.
 - b. For people born in other states outside MA, please research what is possible and needed for amending birth certificates in that location using this [link](#)^{xv}, and get any needed forms or documentation information together *before* requesting help with completion of any materials needed. Contact your medical team case manager to request help getting any documents needed from your medical provider. If you need legal aid for amending birth certificates, we recommend contacting [GLAD](#)^{xvi} or [Lambda Legal](#)^{xvii} and requesting referrals for legal help.

6. **Everything else.** After legal documents are changed, you may need to update health and auto insurance, medical records, bank accounts, etc. Another major document that uses gender markers is health insurance. *It is important to update every service and location of care with your updated information. There is no system that will inform a person's contacts, medical providers, subscriptions, services, mail, utilities, landlords, banks, etc. with this information. Updates are dependent on the individual who handles the documentation needed for each change needed.*
 - a. **A note about health insurance gender markers:** Unless someone has already completed gender affirming surgery and no longer has the organs from the sex originally listed on their health insurance, we recommend keeping their health insurance gender marker the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. It is possible to work out most billing issues, however, this may cause delays or denials in services needed for natal body parts and organs for some individuals based on what insurer they have. Unless someone has Medicare, which is linked to Social Security records, they can change their gender marker everywhere else and in all places that are public (license, passport, etc.) while keeping the gender with their health insurance related to the body parts and organs for which they will need ongoing medical treatment and routine screenings.

Please Note: If someone in MA is unable to afford the cost of these amendments to their documents, and it can be expensive, they can fill out an **Affidavit of Indigency** that will serve to waive some or all the fees associated with these processes. This form is available [here](#)^{xviii}.

Please contact your medical team case manager for help with any of these needs. Call 617-267-0900 and ask to speak with your provider's case manager.

- i <https://transequality.org/documents>
- ii <https://transgenderlawcenter.org/resources/id/id-please-quick-guide>
- iii <https://www.masstpc.org/get-help/identity-documents>
- iv
http://www.transgenderlegal.org/work_show.php?id=7
- v <https://nesl.edu/IAP>
- vi <https://www.glad.org/id/>
- vii http://www.mass-doc.com/probate_court_dir.htm
- viii <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/probate-and-family-court-petition-to-change-name-of-adult-cjp-27>
- ix <https://www.mass.gov/ordering-a-birth-marriage-or-death-certificate>
- x <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/probate-and-family-court-court-activity-record-information-and-warrant-management>
- xi <https://www.mass.gov/name-changes>
- xii <https://www.mass.gov/doc/learners-permit-drivers-license-and-id-card-application/download>
- xiii <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/have-passport/change-correct.html>
- xiv <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/07/rc/r-115-physician-statement-birth-certificate-amendment-following-sex-reassignment.pdf>
- xv <https://www.lambdalegal.org/know-your-rights/article/trans-changing-birth-certificate-sex-designations>
- xvi <https://www.glad.org/>
- xvii <https://www.lambdalegal.org/helpdesk>
- xviii <https://www.mass.gov/lists/court-forms-for-indigency>