



COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

HEALTH STATISTICS AND VITAL RECORDS

Questions and Answers for New Parents

Congratulations on the birth of your child! One of the most important documents your child will need throughout his or her life is a birth certificate. You will be given a worksheet in the hospital to fill out with facts for your baby's birth certificate. The information you provide on the worksheet will be used to prepare and register a permanent legal birth certificate for your child. The birth certificate is a statement of the facts of the birth and helps establish your child's identity, parentage, age, and citizenship. Birth certificates may be needed for a number of purposes throughout a person's life including tax filing, insurance, Head Start programs, day care, pre-school, kindergarten registration, sports, driver's license, voter registration, marriage license, passport and other travel, veteran's benefits, public assistance, social security benefits, and more.

In addition, annual statistics based on birth records are compiled that are essential in planning and evaluating public health programs, population composition and growth, and other important programs. Personal information that you provide on your newborn's record, however, is kept strictly confidential. It is extremely important to provide complete and accurate information so that your child's birth certificate can be correctly prepared by the hospital. The following information will answer some of your questions and be of assistance to you as you provide the information needed by the hospital staff to prepare your child's birth certificate.

Are there any rules about naming my child?

You can give your child any first, middle, and last name that you choose. However, a first and last name are required to receive a social security number for your child and to obtain a certified copy of your child's birth record. While you may give your baby any name that you choose, a legal action may be required if you decide to change it after the birth certificate has been registered. In addition, the state vital records office charges a fee to process changes to a birth certificate.

How should the mother and father's names be listed on my child's birth certificate?

Parents should provide their full, legal first, middle, and last names. Mothers are also asked to provide their maiden name, which is the surname she was born with or given at adoption.

My husband and I are common law married. Can I list him on my child's birth certificate?

Colorado recognizes common law marriage as a legal and binding marriage. A common law marriage is established when the parties mutually consent to be husband and wife. Common law marriage does not require any license, ceremony or documentation to be legal. Parties to a common law marriage are entitled to all rights, privileges and responsibilities of a legal and binding marriage. Since common law marriages are recognized by Colorado, you may list your common law husband as the father on your child's birth certificate.

Can I list the natural father on my child's birth certificate if I am not married to him?

You may list the child's natural father on your child's birth certificate providing that you are not married to someone else and both you and the natural father complete an Acknowledgement of Paternity. If you were married to someone other than the natural father at the time of conception or birth or anytime in between and you wish to have the natural father listed on your child's birth certificate, your husband (or ex-husband), the child's natural father, and you must all complete an Acknowledgement of Paternity. The best time to complete the Acknowledgement of Paternity form is before you leave the hospital. That way, you are sure that the father is listed on the birth certificate before it is sent to our office. In addition, no fee is charged for processing the form if you complete it at the hospital along with the birth certificate.

How long does it take until my child's birth certificate is registered?

Colorado laws states that all birth certificates must be registered within 10 days after the birth occurred. Once you provide the information needed to prepare the birth certificate, hospital personnel will enter the information on the electronic birth registration system and it will then be registered with the State Vital Records. The birth certificate is usually available within two to three weeks after the birth of your child.

Do I automatically receive a copy of my child's birth certificate?

While some hospitals may provide parents with a *souvenir* copy of the birth certificate, this is **NOT** a legal document. In order to receive a certified copy of your child's birth certificate, you must request it from a county or state vital records office and pay the fee for issuance.

How do I get a copy of my child's birth certificate? How much does it cost?

You may obtain a certified copy of your child's birth certificate from any of the county vital records offices that are connected to the State's electronic birth system, or from the state vital records office. A certified copy of a birth certificate is \$17.75 for the first copy and \$10 for each additional copy of the record ordered at the same time. Appropriate ID's required.

How do I obtain a social security number for my child?

The Enumeration at Birth (EAB) program provides an opportunity for parents to secure a social security number for their child without having to file an application with the Social Security Administration. If a child is a United States citizen, he or she is eligible for an SSN no matter what the parents' immigration status is. If you indicate on the birth certificate that you would like a social security number for your child, the state vital records office will send your child's name and the parents' names and social security numbers to the Social Security Administration. According to the Social Security Administration, the parents' social security numbers will be used by the Internal Revenue Service to help in the processing of tax returns, but the Social Security Administration will not share information collected through this process with any other government agency, including the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The state office transmits a listing of newborns whose parents have requested a social security number to the Social Security Administration on the 1st and 16th of each month. Parents typically receive their newborn's social security card within 3-6 weeks after the birth record has been received at the state office. There is no charge to the parents for this service.