

Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Vital Records

Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics

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1. What is your address and telephone number?

Mailing Address:

Ohio Department of Health
P.O. Box 15098
Columbus, Ohio 43215-0098

Walk-in Address:

Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics
225 Neilston Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Telephone: (614) 466-2531

Email: vitalstat@odh.ohio.gov

2. What is the cost of a vital record?

The State office cost per certificate is \$21.50. If paying online or in our office you may use a credit/debit card. Our office also accepts cash, check, and money orders for in person orders. For a mailed order, please make your check or money order payable to: Treasurer, State of Ohio. Please do not send cash in the mail.

3. How long does it take to get a certificate?

For vital records requiring no amendments (adoption, paternity establishment, name changes, etc) please allow a processing time of **2 weeks** from the date the request is received in this office. The city and county health departments often can issue certified copies much more quickly; you can find their contact information thru www.odh.ohio.gov/vs Any corrections or legal changes will require up to 2 months for review, processing and issuance.

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4. Which hours are you open?

Same day service is available to walk-in customers (for Ohio birth and death records only) Monday – Friday: 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM in our office at 225 Neilston Street in Columbus. Please understand any walk-in after 4:30 PM is not guaranteed same day service; an order can be dropped and scheduled for pick up or staff will mail it out the next day.

Our office is closed for state holidays, including:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving
- Christmas

5. How do I place an order for a record?

There are four ways in which to obtain a vital record in Ohio: **online, in person at a Vital Statistics office, or via mail.**

- I. Direct online orders for birth, death and paternity affidavits are accepted by credit card through the state website at no additional fee. Turnaround is estimated at **2 weeks** from the day the request is received. Please note that no rush orders or international deliveries are available through this service. Start at <https://odhgateway.odh.ohio.gov/OrderBirthCertificates/>
- II. The local city or county health department where the event occurred, provided there is no court or legal action. Click on the following link to locate the local health district office, including their website for ordering details: www.odh.ohio.gov/vs
- III. Walk-in service is available at the Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, 225 Neilston Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215 from Monday – Friday: 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM. The cost is \$21.50 payable by cash, credit card, check or U.S. money order. The approximate turnaround time is 20 minutes (orders after 4:30 pm are not guaranteed same day).
- IV. Mail service is available to the Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, cost is \$21.50, check or money order. For all birth records requiring no legal changes (adoption, paternity establishment, etc) and for all death records, please allow delivery time of 3 weeks from the date the request is received in this office. Any requested legal change to a vital record takes time. Time to process a legal change may take 2 months before a revised copy of the record can be issued.

6. How do I check the status of a request I submitted by mail?

Please call our customer service representatives, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at (614) 466-2531 or email vitalstat@odh.ohio.gov . Allow our office **up to** 3 weeks for processing.

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7. Which vital records do you have?

The state Bureau of Vital Statistics has all births that occurred in Ohio between December 20, 1908 – present and all deaths occurring in Ohio that occurred from January 1, 1964 to the present. The state Bureau of Vital Statistics also has indexes for marriages and divorces from January 1, 1954 to the present.

For requests of recent vital events, please note it can take up to 1 month for a **birth or death** record to be **filed with the local health department and registered with the state office.**

For more information about older records that were archived to the Ohio History Connection, visit <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/vitalstatistics/vitalmisc/whichrecs.aspx>

8. How do I obtain a marriage license or divorce decree?

The Bureau of Vital Statistics **does not issue** **copies of** marriage licenses (issued by the county probate courts) or divorce decrees (issued by the county clerk of courts). The Bureau of Vital Statistics maintains an index of marriages and divorces that occurred in Ohio from January 1, 1954, to present. **Our office can search our index for information from marriage and divorce abstracts that may be used to locate actual licenses or decrees from the courts.**

- For a marriage license, contact your **County Probate Court** where the original marriage license is on file. For a directory, visit <http://probate.franklincountyohio.gov/about/related-links.cfm>
- For a divorce decree, contact your **County Clerk of Courts** where the original divorce decree is on file. For a directory, visit <http://www.occaohio.com/counties/>

9. I have been told that I need to get an apostille/foreign authentication. How do I do that?

First request your certificate from the Bureau of Vital Statistics. **The certified record will be returned to you; you are responsible** for verifying the record before submitting it to the Secretary of State. The office of the Ohio Secretary of State is not located in the Bureau of Vital Statistics. For more information contact (614) 728-9200 or (877) 767-6446 or **visit** their web site: <http://www.sos.state.oh.us/SOS/recordsIndexes/authentication.aspx>

10. What is the procedure to correct information on a birth record?

Requirements for making corrections or changes to vital records vary depending on the type of correction or change. See <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/vitalstatistics/legalinfo/leglname.aspx>

11. How can I add the father's name to my child's birth certificate?

Paternity establishment refers to the legal determination of being named as a child's father. The **voluntary acknowledgment process** refers to completion of a form known as an Acknowledgement of Paternity. You can complete this at the hospital when your child is born, before both parents leave the hospital. It can also be completed at your local Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) http://ifs.ohio.gov/County/County_Directory.pdf or the local city or county health department at: www.odh.ohio.gov/vs
(Acknowledgement of Paternity continued)

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If some doubt as to the parentage of the child or it is contested, either parent may request that the CSEA conduct genetic testing to determine the father of the child. The CSEA will then order all parties to submit to genetic testing and will issue an administrative paternity order based on the outcome of the genetic test. For a paternity order to be established, the test must show at least a 99% probability of fatherhood.

The **Determination of Paternity** form is issued from either Juvenile Court or Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) after genetic testing is conducted. CSEA will conduct genetic testing only if there is not a father listed on the birth certificate. If a mother was married at the time of the child's birth and the husband is listed on the birth certificate, the father change must be ordered from Juvenile Court.

12. How do I correct a spelling mistake on a birth record?

It is possible to correct spelling mistakes on a certificate by submitting an affidavit of correction to the Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics. Such affidavits must be signed in the presence of a Notary Public. There is no cost to process the change in addition to the cost for a certified copy.

Some fields can only be corrected by court order; to obtain a court-ordered correction of birth contact the County probate court where the child was born. Contact information for Ohio Probate Courts is listed on the following website: <http://probate.franklincountyohio.gov/about/related-links.cfm>

13. How do I add a given name to a birth certificate?

To add the first and middle name to a certificate when these items do not appear, or to make a minor correction to the spelling of a name (a correction that would not actually change the name), **the individual named on the birth certificate (or their parents/guardians if the individual is under the age of 18) may complete** an Affidavit of Correction. For the correction to be made to a certificate that has already been issued, the following conditions must be met:

- 1) The certificate must have been issued by the Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics (not a local health department),
- 2) The certificate must have been issued within the last twelve months,
- 3) You must fill out Form HEA 2727 "AFFIDAVIT OF CORRECTION OF BIRTH RECORD" according to the instructions and sign the form in the presence of a Notary Public.
- 4) You must return the certificate that was issued to you, along with the Affidavit, to:
Ohio Department of Health
Bureau of Vital Statistics
P O Box 15098
Columbus OH 43215-0098

Along with the certificate and affidavit, include a short note or letter explaining the circumstances. Include your return address. A corrected copy will be prepared and returned to you without additional charge. A copy of HEA 2727 "Affidavit of Correction of Birth Record" can be obtained by contacting our Customer Service Unit at 614-466-2531 or via email at vitalstat@odh.ohio.gov.

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14. I was adopted. How can I obtain copies of my original birth record before the adoption?

After an adoption, the original birth record and all other legal documents related to the adoption are sealed and are not accessible except under certain procedures specified by state law. As explained on our website at <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/vitalstatistics/legalinfo/adoption.aspx>, the laws and regulations governing the information and confidentiality of adoptions will vary depending on the date the adoption was finalized. Please visit our web page for details of information release restrictions. Should you have specific questions after reading the guidance, please contact our customer service team at (614) 466-2531.

15. I was born outside the U.S. but a child of U.S. parent(s). Where do I get a birth certificate?

U.S. Dept. of State
Passport Services, Correspondence Branch
1111 19th Street NW, Suite 510
Washington, DC 20522-1705
(202) 955-0307 or (202) 647-4000

16. Is Ohio an “open record” state? How can I search for another certificate?

Yes, vital records (records of births, deaths, marriages and terminations of marriage) are considered to be public records by the State of Ohio. This means that anyone who can submit the basic facts of a certificate may request a copy of it.

When attempting to locate a vital record, if the date of occurrence of event is unknown, this Bureau of Vital Statistics will search via mail. In order for a search to take place, it is necessary you specify the following: 1) the type of record to be searched; 2) a last name; and 3) a period of time to be searched. It is important to be aware that the less information submitted, the less successful the search is likely to be. If all that is available is a last name and a period of ten or twenty years, there could be dozens or even hundreds of possibilities.

17. Where can I get vital records for births/deaths in a different state?

Visit <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w.htm> for the national directory of state health departments.

18. Where can I find older records that were archived from your office?

Pursuant to Ohio Administrative Code, Section 3701-5-11, death records older than fifty years and birth records older than one hundred and twenty-five years may be removed from the Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics (ODH/VS), and sent to the Ohio historical society for archival.

ODH/VS will not certify copies of records that have been removed from the vital records vault and sent to the archives at the Ohio History Connection. Plain paper copies may be purchased from the Ohio History Connection. Customers may obtain certified copies by contacting the local health district in which the vital event took place (local health districts are not subject to the same retention schedule as ODH/VS). For more information about archived records, including how to request a copy, please contact [next page]:

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The Ohio History Connection
Phone: 1(800)686-6124
Website: www.ohiohistory.org

The Ohio History Connection houses Ohio death records from December 20, 1908 through December 31, 1963. A limited internet index of death certificates is available at <http://resources.ohiohistory.org/death/>

Birth and death records from 1867 through December 19, 1908, were filed through the county probate courts. There is no statewide index to birth and death records from 1867 through December 19, 1908. The Ohio History Connection maintains a list of county probate court vital records held in their archives; if the Ohio History Connection does not hold a county's vital records, please contact the county's probate court directly.

19. Can I get an uncertified copy?

Effective July 1, 2003, requests for uncertified copies of vital records have not been accepted by the Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, or by the local health departments of Ohio counties and cities.

You may come to the front office of the Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, and perform searches using our indexes. It is also possible to arrange for a third party to search the indexes for records. An appointment is recommended to search the records. Appointments are made by calling (614) 466-2531.

You or your representative may view records as time allows and copy information from them; however, the copy supplied must be turned in after examination and is not permitted to leave the building.

There are professional genealogists who routinely perform this work. However, the Ohio Department of Health does not endorse any specific person or organization.

20. Can a veteran receive a copy without charge?

Yes. **Ohio Revised Code states** "When a copy of any public record is required by the veterans' administration to be used in determining the eligibility of any person to participate in benefits made available by the veterans' administration or in the furtherance of any proceedings under sections 5905.01 to 5905.19, inclusive, of the Revised Code, the official custodian of such public record shall without charge provide the applicant for such benefits, any person acting on his behalf, or the authorized representative of the veterans' administration with a certified copy of such record." **We recommend that applicants go through their local veterans affairs office, which can complete and submit the necessary form on behalf of the veteran or their beneficiaries.**