



Mutual Consent Voluntary Adoption Registry Fact Sheet

Introduction

This registry allows people who have been adopted or have given someone up for adoption give certain information to a statewide database. The database can help connect adoptees with their birth parents or relatives. It also can simply provide information about one's genetic, health, and social history without identifying the birth relatives to each other. In either case, both the adoptee and their birth parents must have registered for the program to be helpful.

Each licensed adoption agency in Arkansas can establish an adoption registry. The Arkansas Mutual Consent Voluntary Adoption Registry is operated by the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS). This agency has previously been known as the "Welfare Department" or "Social Services."

How the Registry Works

If you want to be identified to your birth relatives, you must register. When you decide to register, a registry coordinator will look to see if the people you want to find have registered. Your birth relatives must also have registered and consented to be identified to you for this to happen. You will be informed of the search outcome. Even if your relatives have not registered, your information will stay on file.

Each time someone new registers, the files will be searched to see if there is a match. It may take years for the relatives you want to identify to register.

They might never register. If there is a match, a registry coordinator will contact you. Registration is voluntary, and the registry coordinator does not contact people to ask them to register.

If you do not want to identify yourself but want information about the genetic, health, and social history of an adoptee, you still must register. Upon receiving your registration, the registry coordinator will search adoption records for the adoptee's background information. The information will not identify any birth relative or adopted relative of the adoptee. If one is available, you will get a comprehensive report.

Any qualified person can remove their name from the registry at any time by filing a notarized affidavit with the registry.

Qualifications

The adoption must have been arranged by the DCFS or an Arkansas-licensed adoption agency that has transferred its registry to DCFS.

To identify yourself to your birth relatives, you must be:

- an adult adoptee at least 18 years old
- a birth parent of an adopted child
- a birth grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, or sibling of an adoptee

To get an adoptee's genetic, health, and social history, you must be:

- an adoptee who is at least 18 years old
- a birth parent of an adopted child
- the adoptive parents or in the event of their death the adopted child's guardian
- the legal guardian of any child of the adoptee
- any child-welfare agency having custody of the adoptee

If the adoptee is dead, their children and widow or widower can also register to sign up for this information, as can the guardian of any child of the adoptee.

If you are not sure that your adoption was arranged by the state of Arkansas, you can still register. Also, you may contact other licensed adoption agencies about registration.

If You Are the Adoptee

Submit the following information in writing:

- a brief explanation of the type of information you want, such as background or biological information, medical or social history, or an attempt to locate a birth relative
- your adopted, i.e., your legal, name (do not use nicknames)
- your date of birth
- the legal names of your adopted parents
- your return mailing address
- any other information that might be helpful in finding what you are seeking, such as the name of the hospital, the birth name, where your adopted parents lived, etc.



If You Are a Birth Relative of the Adoptee

Submit the following in writing:

- a brief explanation of the type of information you are seeking and background information on the adoptive family or the birth child you are trying to find
- the birth name given to the adoptee
- the adoptee's date of birth
- the birth mom's name at the time of birth
- your legal name
- your relationship to the adoptee
- your return mailing address
- any other helpful information, such as where the adopted parent lived, the hospital where the child was born, the city or town of birth, etc.

How to Register

To identify yourself to your birth relatives, you must complete an Affidavit or Registration form, attend a one-hour counseling session, and pay a \$20 fee. If you live in Arkansas, the counseling must be provided by a DCFS adoption specialist. The registry coordinator will provide you with a list of specialists. If you live elsewhere, counseling must be provided by a social worker employed by a licensed agency in your state. Filings of any affidavits and sealed adoption records will be retained 99 years after the date of registration or finalization.

To get a genetic, health, and social history of an adoptee, you must complete the Affidavit or Registration form and pay a \$5 fee.

You can register for both services on one form and pay a \$25 fee.

Mail the completed, notarized affidavit form and the fee payment to:

**Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of
Children and Family Services Adoption Registry**
P.O. Box 1437, Slot S565
Little Rock, AR 72203

Getting an Affidavit Form

Send a written request for one at the above address or visit the following link:

humanservices.arkansas.gov/dcfs/DCFSformsLibrary/CFS-434.pdf

If you decide to send in a written request, the DCFS registry coordinator will send you an Affidavit or Registration. Do not send any money until you return your notarized Affidavit or Registration form.

You may also call the registry coordinator at (501) 682-8462 or toll free at 1-888-736-2820. Ask to speak to the adoption registry coordinator. In the case of medical emergencies, you may also email or the registry coordinator at chanel.lewis@arkansas.gov.

For more information visit the Arkansas DHS website at arkansas.gov/dhhs or call toll free at 1-888-736-2820.

This fact sheet is a collaboration of the Center for Arkansas Legal Services and Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc. These nonprofit organizations provide free legal assistance to eligible Arkansans who meet income, asset, and other guidelines. Legal assistance may also include advice and counsel, brief services, or full representation depending on the situation. For more information about civil legal aid in Arkansas, please visit arlegalservices.org. For information specific to Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc., visit arlegalaid.org. Apply for services online or by calling 1-800-9-LAW-AID (1-800-952-9243).

The information and statements of law in this fact sheet should not be considered legal advice. This fact sheet is provided as a broad guide to help you understand how certain legal matters are handled in general. Courts may interpret the law differently. Before you take action, talk to an attorney and follow his or her advice. Always do what the court tells you to do.

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