



Identification Documents and Transgender People:

An Overview of the Name and Gender Marker
Change Process in the United States

Updating Documents & Records

The process for changing a legal name and/or updating gender marker depends on where you live, where you were born, and other individual circumstances and needs. This guide should give you an overview of that process!

To Change Your Name

In most states, you need an order from the court to change your legal name. Use copies of the court order to change your name on any document and record that you'd like to update.

*To change your name, follow the name change process in the state **where you live**.*

To Change Your Gender Marker

To change your gender marker, follow the instructions for each document or record you want to update.

*To update your birth certificate, follow the process in the state **where you were born**.*

*To update your driver's license, follow the process in the state **where you live**.*

For state-specific instructions on name change orders and gender marker changes, see TransEquality.org/Documents.

The process for updating a name and gender marker on documents and records typically looks like this...

Legal name change



Update social security record



Update license or state/territory ID



Update financial, insurance, school, & employment records



Update passport *(if you have one)*



Update birth certificate *(if you need or want to)*

Checklist

This is the typical process for updating names and gender markers. For more details or more specific information for your state or territory, visit TransEquality.org/Documents.

Obtain a court-ordered name *(if changing your legal name)*¹

File for your name change in the state where you live or have residency.

- Find out if there is a fee or publication requirement and if it can be waived.
- Ask for your case to be sealed if you are concerned about privacy or safety.
- Obtain multiple certified copies of the court-ordered change (this may cost money).

Update information with Social Security

Find more details at TransEquality.org/SSA

- Locate the nearest Social Security office (secure.ssa.gov/locator)
- If changing your name bring a certified copy of your name change order.
- If changing your gender, bring proof of transition using **one** of the following:
 - A valid 10-year passport showing your updated gender
 - A birth certificate showing your updated gender
 - A court order recognizing a change of gender
 - A signed letter from a doctor on letterhead showing appropriate clinical treatment
 - A valid 10-year passport showing your updated gender

Update state ID or drivers license with the Department of Motor Vehicles

Complete this step in the state where you live or have residency.

- To update your legal name, bring your court-ordered name change document.
- To update your gender marker, follow the instructions in the state where you live.
- See TransEquality.org/Documents for more information.

Update insurance, financial accounts, and school or employment records

Typically, you will only need a copy of your name change order, as many of these documents do not show gender.

- Update your name on bank accounts, credit cards, and other financial records.
- Update the name on your health, car and home insurance plans if applicable.
- Update your name on any other IDs or records.

The processes for updating school and workplace records may vary.

Apply for an updated passport *(if you have one)*

To update the gender marker on your passport, you will need to submit a letter from a physician confirming that you have had appropriate clinical treatment for gender transition. Use exact language from our sample letter at TransEquality.org/Passports. All passport applications that include a gender change must be submitted in person at a Passport Acceptance Facility (find one at iafdb.travel.state.gov). If you're only updating your name, you can submit your application in person or in the mail.

- Ensure that your physician follows the exact language of the NCTE model letter.
- Check to make sure a physician (MD or DO) signed the letter and that it is on the physician's letterhead.

¹ Some applicants may wish to file for a court order for gender change at the same time as their name change depending on if the state or territory requires legal recognition of gender transition.



Apply for an updated birth certificate *(if desired)*

If you want an updated birth certificate for school enrollment, employment, or other reasons, follow the instructions in the state or territory where you were born, regardless of where you currently live. If you were born in another country, follow the process for that country.

- If you were born in a state where it is difficult to update your birth certificate you may want to get an updated passport, which you can often use instead of a birth certificate as proof of citizenship.
- If the state where you were born requires a court order recognizing your gender to update your birth certificate, you may be able to get that court order issued in the state where you currently live or you may have to petition the state where you were born. For more information about your state's process, visit TransEquality.org/Documents.



Inform Selective Services of a name change *(if applicable)*

According to Selective Service rules, all individuals assigned male at birth are required to register with Selective Service. All name changes are to be reported to Selective Service. Learn more at TransEquality.org/SSA-Trans.

- Fill out a Change of information form and return it with a copy of your name change court order at Tiny.cc/SSS-portal.
- Individuals assigned female at birth may need to obtain a status information letter to show that you are exempt from registering at Tiny.cc/Trans-Status.



Update immigration documents *(if applicable)*

If you have changed your legal name, submit your court-ordered name change document to update your name on immigration records.

If you are updating your gender, you will need to submit a driver's license, birth certificate, passport, court order, or other official government-issued document reflecting the requested gender designation OR a letter from a licensed health care professional certifying the change in gender as shown in the sample letter at TransEquality.org/immigration-documents.



Update voter registration *(if you are over 18 and able to vote)*

If you haven't registered to vote yet and are able, please register! Voter registration can be updated with the Board of Elections or with the Department of Motor Vehicles.

- See USA.Gov/Register-To-Vote for more information on your state.

More Information

ID Documents Center

Get state-specific information on updating your driver's license, birth certificate, and other records at TransEquality.org/Documents.

Legal Services Network

NCTE's Trans Legal Services Network ensures that trans people can access assistance navigating the complicated name and gender change process and any other legal issues they may face. Learn more at TransEquality.org/Legal-Network.