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DEPARTMENT OF
**PUBLIC HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES**

CHARLIE BRERETON
DIRECTOR

Montana Clerk & Recorder Manual

Revised August 2026

Welcome to the **Montana Office of Vital Records (OVR)** Clerk and Recorder Manual. This guide is designed to serve as your primary resource for establishing and maintaining uniformity across the state.

While we have tried to anticipate the most common questions and scenarios you may encounter, we recognize that the unique nature of vital records often involves complex circumstances. If this manual does not provide the solution you need, the OVR team is available to assist you.

Please review this manual thoroughly and keep it accessible for quick reference. As procedures evolve and legislation updates, we will provide new versions of this document for you.

Contact Information

For all general inquiries, or if you are unsure which staff member to contact, please use the main office line as your first point of contact.

- **Main Office Line:** 406-444-2685
- **Office Email:** HHSVitalRecords@MT.Gov
- **Office Fax:** 406-444-1803
- **Mailing Address:**

Office of Vital Records
PO Box 4210
111 N Sanders, RM 6
Helena, MT 59604

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Vital Records Contacts

Annie Kurtz – State Registrar

- Phone Number: 406.444.4250
- Email: Ann.Kurtz@MT.Gov

Sandy Tirrell – Deputy State Registrar

- Phone Number: 406.444.5249
- Email: Sandra.Tirrell@MT.Gov

Connie Robinson – Corrections to Birth and Death Certificates

- Phone Number: 406.444.9039
- Email: Connie.Robinson@MT.Gov

Vicky Root – Adoptions, Surrogacy, and Court Ordered Name Changes

- Phone Number: 406.444.4226
- Email: Vicky.Root@MT.Gov

Jesse Utick – Paternity Corrections, Disinterment Permits, and Security Paper

- Phone Number: 406.444.1986
- Email: Jesse.Utick@MT.gov

Katie Strong – Issuance

- Phone Number: 406.444.4252
- Email: Katie.Strong@MT.Gov

Ed Soto – Issuance

- Phone Number: 406.444.4264
- Email: Ed.Soto@MT.Gov

Kaylie Kummer – Data Acquisition, Data Provider Resource

- Phone Number: 406.444.4251
- Email: Kaylie.Kummer@MT.Gov

Jon Ryden – Data Acquisition, Access

- Phone Number: 406.444.4264
- Email: Jon.Ryden@MT.Gov

McKayla Rogers – Homebirths, Delayed Certificates, and Marriage and Divorce

- Phone Number: 406.444.0693
- Email: McKayla.Rogers@MT.Gov

New Employee Onboarding & Registrar Transitions

When a change in County Registrar occurs, please notify the State Registrar and the Deputy State Registrar as soon as the transition dates are confirmed. There cannot be a gap in registrars. If the wrong registrar is on the birth or death record, it makes that record invalid and it must be destroyed and replaced.

All new employees requiring access to the OVR database must complete the following security steps. Please reach out to Jon Ryden to start the onboarding process.

1. Create an OKTA account.
2. Submit a formal request for access to the vital records systems.
3. Sign and submit the required confidentiality documentation.

Please contact the Montana DPHHS IT Department for password resets or OKTA-related issues at:

(406) 444-9500

Training Resources:

- Database resources, training videos, and forms can be found on this site: [Data Providers](#)
- The VERS User Guide is available for download here: [VERS User Guide](#)

Certificate Issuance:

If your county hires a new employee who will be issuing certificates, their signature must be on file with the Secretary of State's office. Make sure to update the Secretary of State before the new employee begins to issue certificates.

Please reach out to the Secretary of State's office for more information regarding this process at **(406) 444-1877**

Security Paper

All certified copies of birth and death certificates must be issued on security paper ordered from OVR.

Security paper contains numerous visible and hidden features to protect against counterfeiting and fraudulent altering of the certificate. Each piece of security paper must be inventoried, tracked, and reconciled. The paper must be stored in a secure location. If a significant amount of security paper is unaccounted for, please notify OVR.

Each sheet of security paper contains a red number on the lower left corner on the backside. This is unique document identifier. Every day, the certificate paper log needs to show exactly what paper tracking numbers (located on the back of security paper, lower left corner, in red) are issued. If a certificate needs to be voided, this should be documented in the log, and the paper must be shredded.

OVR will supply security paper upon request via email or phone call.

You can reach out to Jesse Utick at 406.444.1986 or Jesse.Utick@MT.gov to place an order. The cost per ream is \$171.55. If needed, the W-9 can be emailed upon request.

Here is an example of how OVR tracks security paper:

REQUEST DATE▼	DATE PRINTED▼	CERT NUMBER▼	FILE NUMBER▼	Receipt #▼	Name▼	B/I▼	INITIAL▼
1/1/2026	1/2/2026	3847001	2026-000001	123456789	John Doe	Birth	KK
1/1/2026	1/2/2026	3847002	2026-000002	12356790	Jane Doe	Death	KK

Certificates printed from VERS will automatically track the security paper in the system. More about this feature will be explained once this is implemented in the database.

Death Certificates

Death certificates are considered public record in the State of Montana. Anyone can request a copy of the death record regardless of their relation to the certificate holder if the requestor provides an acceptable ID. To ensure the correct record is being issued, please confirm the name of the decedent, the date of death, and the county of death.

The ability to issue a certificate depends on the year the death occurred:

- **1954 to 2002:** These records exist in the database as an indexing tool only. For deaths in this date range, certificates must be issued by OVR or the Clerk and Recorder in the county of occurrence.
- **2003 to Present:** These records are fully accessible in the Vital Event Registration System (VERS). You can print all the below versions of certificates from VERS.

If the cause of death is “pending”, a certified copy can still be issued. However, you should inform the customer about the cause of death and offer to issue it at a later date as most agencies require the completed cause of death.

Abstract Copies

An abstract copy of the death certificate is the standard copy most customers need. Abstracts are accepted by most agencies within the United States.

Long Form Certificates or Vault Copies

A long form death certificate should be issued if the person is requesting the record for genealogy, dual citizenship, or having the certificate apostilled.

HIPAA Copies:

HIPAA copies of the death certificate can be issued when cause of death is listed as pending or if the person would like the certificate without the medical information. This version only includes the decedent’s demographic information. You should confirm with the customer before issuing this version as some agencies may not accept it.

County of Residence (COR) Protocols

Per Montana law (MCA 50-15-402), if a Montana resident dies in a county other than their own, the Clerk and Recorder in the county of occurrence must send a copy of the death certificate to the Clerk and Recorder in the county of residence.

If OVR processes a correction, the notice is sent only to the county of occurrence. It is the responsibility of the county of occurrence to forward the correction notice or the updated certificate to the county of residence.

This law is up for change during the 2027 Legislative Session. This manual section will be updated if the law is changed.

Birth Certificates

Unlike death certificates, birth certificates are not public records. Access is strictly limited by 50-15-121 MCA and 37.8.126 ARM.

Abstract Birth Certificates

Clerk and recorders can print a birth certificate from the OVR database for any individual born in Montana from 1920 through the present, even if the individual was not born in that county. These certificates are acceptable for most purposes, such as obtaining a driver's license, passports, enrolling in school, insurance, employment, and retirement.

Long Form Certificates or Vault Copies

Long form birth certificates should be issued for genealogy, tribal enrollment, apostilles, foreign adoption, foreign marriages, and dual citizenship. Before 2003, long forms need to be issued from OVR or from the county of occurrence. After 2003, long forms and abstract copies can be printed from VERS.

Informational Copies

Informational copies of birth or death certificates can be printed on white copy paper with a red stamp across the information that says, "FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY." Informational copies should be issued from the vault copy. The certificate will **not** contain a raised seal or any statement that will certify the copy as true, and it will **not** be signed by the clerk and recorder or deputy clerk.

Copies of birth certificates may be released to the public after 30 years. Anyone researching genealogy, who is not authorized by law to receive a certified copy, should only get an informational copy of the certificate.

State and County Records Differences

There can be data differences between OVR's record and the county's copy. In all cases, OVR's record is considered the original and correct record. When a difference between the records is noted, do not issue the record. Instead, contact OVR for guidance. Additionally, if there is a copy of a certificate in your files, but it is not in the electronic system, please contact OVR. Do not issue the record until the situation is clarified.

Apostille and Authentication

Some birth and death certificates which are requested for foreign use (adoption, marriage, work, etc.) may be requested to be sent to the Secretary of State Office for an Apostille after your office has issued a certified copy of the original certificate.

All certificates sent to the Secretary of State Office must be **long form** certificates. There is a fee of \$10 per certificate that is apostilled. Staff or customers may contact the Secretary of State's office at 406-444-1877 or SOSNotary@MT.Gov

Who Can Obtain a Birth Certificate?

Requester Relation	Supporting Documents Required (In addition to Valid ID)
The Certificate Holder	None
Parent Listed on the Certificate	None
Child of the Certificate Holder	Their own birth certificate listing the holder as a parent.
Current Spouse of the Certificate Holder	None (Marriage certificate may be requested for verification if needed).
Grandparent or Great-Grandparent of the Certificate Holder	Copies of the birth certificates linking themselves to the certificate holder.
Grandchild or Great-Grandchild of Certificate Holder	Copies of the birth certificates linking themselves to the certificate holder.
Legal Custodian, Guardian, or Conservator of The Subject	A certified, signed court order naming the requestor.
Health Care Agent of the Subject	A valid health care power of attorney document.
The Subject's Personal Representative Who Requires Birth Certificate for Administration of the Estate	Notarized form signed by the certificate holder giving them access to the certified record.
Person With a Valid U.S. Court Order Directing Release of the Certificate to Them	Copy of court order

Power of Attorney, notarized release forms, and custody/guardianship paperwork should always include the name of the certificate holder and preferably their date of birth. They must be properly certified and recently issued. A valid photocopy of the requestor's ID should always be requested as well.

Step-relatives, in-laws, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, ex-spouses, and a natural parent of an adoptive child can never obtain a certified copy of the record unless they have power of attorney or custody of the certificate holder.

Acceptable ID

A legal ID is required for all issuance of certified and informational birth and death certificates. If a picture ID with a signature is not available, two other forms of identification are required; one **MUST** have a signature. **If the identification requirement is NOT met the certificate should not be issued.**

Picture ID with a Signature

- Driver's license
- State ID card
- Passport
- Military ID card
- Tribal ID

Two forms of ID – One MUST have a Signature

- Social Security card
- Work ID card
- Car registration/insurance
- Doctor/medical record
- Fishing license
- US Military DD214
- Utility bill with current address
- Voter registration card
- Credit/debit/ATM card
- School ID card
- Insurance record
- Paystub
- Traffic/pawn ticket
- Court record

If the certificate holder does not have any of these forms of ID, they can have an authorized family member who has a valid ID request the certificate. Alternatively, the certificate holder or the authorized requestor can have the application notarized in place of an ID. The authorized requestor would still need to supply the supporting documentation if applicable.

Proof of relationship

To maintain the security of vital records, a clear and documented "chain of relationship" must be established between the requestor and the registrant. This is most common when grandparents, great-grandparents, or adult grandchildren are requesting records.

- If the person connecting the requestor to the registrant (e.g., the parent of the grandchild) was born in Montana, the relationship can often be verified electronically.
- If the person connecting the requestor to the registrant was born in another state or country, the database cannot verify the relationship, and the requestor must supply that certificate before they can access the record.

Certified Birth Certificates for Deceased Individuals

If a birth certificate is marked deceased, a certified copy can be issued to an authorized requestor. The requestor must follow all the above procedures, and the certificate must be marked "DECEASED" on the copy issued. Due to the potential for fraudulent attempts to obtain birth certificates of deceased individuals, please notify OVR immediately if such a request occurs. If a person is trying to get their certificate and it has been accidentally marked "DECEASED," contact OVR.

No Find Procedures

OVR officially began filing birth and death certificates in 1907. While OVR maintains a collection of records that pre-date 1907, these records were not legally required to be filed, so many births and deaths were never recorded. If you are unable to find a certificate from this time period, it is likely the event was never recorded by OVR.

After 1907, there is still a chance that the record was never recorded by OVR especially if the birth occurred at home. Please direct the applicant to OVR where a comprehensive search of all state archives will be completed to ensure the record was not filed in a different manner or indexed under a misspelling. If the individual needs a legal birth record established, OVR will work directly with them to begin the Delayed Birth Certificate process.

If a delayed record cannot be created, OVR will issue a certified letter of no find to the customer, informing other agencies that the record they are seeking does not exist within the State of Montana. This letter is helpful especially with dual citizenship and can sometimes be used in place of the missing birth or death certificate. The record should NOT be recreated.

If your county's vault is missing a birth record from before 1997 or a death record from before 2003, OVR cannot supplement that record for your vault.

Delayed Birth Certificates

Delayed birth certificates are used for individuals whose births were not registered within their first year of life. All delayed birth certificates must be registered through OVR. Delayed certificates will not be filed for an individual who is deceased or for someone who was not born in Montana.

If a birth is not registered, but the child is under one year old, the record can be filed as a home birth. Homebirths will receive a standard file number. Please have the customer reach out to OVR if their child's birth is not filed with us.

MCA 50-15-204 states that delayed birth certificates must contain a summary statement to explain the delayed registration. Since each certificate includes supporting documents, delayed certificates from before 2026 cannot be issued out of VERS.

Therefore, a delayed certificate must be issued as a copy of the original certificate from OVR's vault or out of the vault in the county in which the birth occurred. The acceptability of the delayed certificate is up to the agency, judicial or administrative body before which the certificate is offered as evidence.

The delayed birth certificate should always be issued with copies of the supporting documents that were used to establish the record. These documents should be printed on white copy paper and certified by the issuer on the back. Passport and social security offices often require these documents as the documents provide how the birth record was established.

Here is an example of what the State Office uses to certify records:

This certifies that the foregoing is
a true and correct copy of the
original document on file with the
Montana Department of
Public Health and Human Services,
Office of Vital Records

Date _____ By (Printed name and signature of issuer).

Records in OVR's vault include supporting documents stapled to the vault copy of the certificate. That way OVR can issue the certificate and the documents together. The delayed certificates are all booked together as they have their own file numbers. This is not necessary for your vault, assuming you can find and issue the certificates and the supporting documents.

Foreign Adoptions

Certificates for individuals born in another country who were adopted in Montana can only be issued by OVR if processed before 2026. These records use the delayed birth certificate file number sequence.

Even though Montana issues a certificate for these cases, the record will still reflect the actual country of birth. This is a common point of inquiry for customers; the certificate serves as proof of the legal adoption and parentage, but it does not change the fact that the birth occurred outside of the United States.

Vault Copies of Certificates

The original vault copy should never be given to any customer under any circumstances. This copy must remain in your vault, and copies of the record can be issued from the original.

Issuing Long Form Certificates from your Vault:

Once you have scanned an original certificate from your vault, you can print this certificate on security paper to make it a certified copy.

Each certified copy of a vital record issued in Montana must include:

1. The date the record is issued.
2. The signature of the authorized issuer.
3. The signature of the authorized certifier or a facsimile approved by the certifier.
4. The seal (raised or embossed) of the issuing agency or office.
5. The state or local file number.
6. The name of the registrant.
7. The date of birth, in this format: January 1, 1990.
8. County of birth.
9. Sex.
10. The date the original record was filed in this format: January 1, 1990.
11. The names of the registrant's parents. If either parent's name is not included on the record, the phrase "NOT RECORDED" must be displayed on the certified copy where the name would normally appear. DO NOT STAMP "NOT RECORDED" ON THE ORIGINAL RECORD.

From 1940 to 1968, original birth certificates have a section for medical and health information usually located at the bottom of the certificate. This is sensitive information and should never be included on a copy of the certificate. Whenever a certified or informational birth certificate is issued, the "Medical and Health" section must be removed. To do this, crop the section out before it is copied onto the security paper.

Corrections to Certificates

All corrections to a vital record can only be made by OVR. If anyone states that a correction is needed to a vital record, do not issue the certificate; instead, direct them to OVR. If the person states that the information on the record is correct, but the information on their ID is wrong, they must provide another form of ID that verifies the information on the birth record. This can be a social security card, a marriage license, etc.

Corrections requested before the child turns one are made at no charge. Requests for these corrections can be made using the *parents' informational copy* of the birth record that is provided by the hospital or the midwife. This copy is not an official birth certificate; it can only be used for corrections.

If the certificate holder is older than one year, the correction fee is \$25. An affidavit of correction and supporting document(s) or a court order is required to amend these records.

Importance of accurate records

Since the implementation of Real ID requirements, agencies across the country are extremely strict on all legal documents matching exactly. The information on the ID and any additional documents needed to obtain the birth certificate must match the information on the birth record. If there are spelling or spacing errors in any of the names listed, the birth certificate should not be issued.

Denying Issuance of a Certificate

While it is difficult to deny issuance, it is in the customers' best interest to have accurate information on their records. For cases where customers ask for an explanation as to why they cannot have the birth certificate with incorrect information, you may cite the following:

- **Montana Code Annotated 50-15-114:** The person willfully and knowingly makes any false statement in a report, record, or certificate required to be filed by law or in an application for an amendment of a report, record, or certificate or willfully and knowingly supplies false information, intending that the information be used in the preparation of any report, record, or certificate or amendment.
- **Administrative Rules of Montana: 37.8.107 AMENDMENT OF VITAL RECORD:** The department's supervisory staff may amend a vital record when the nature of the amendment is needed to protect the integrity, accuracy, and validity of the record.

Especially in demanding circumstances when customers require the birth certificate the same day for situations such as housing, government assistance, childcare, passport, or Real ID, it is unfortunate to deny them the certificate. However, if the certificate were issued to them, they most likely would not return in the future to have it properly fixed, leaving the record inaccurate.

Corrections That Can be Made with a Notarized Affidavit and Supporting Documents:

- When changing the spelling of a name that is pronounced the same, only spelled differently or incorrectly, the notarized affidavit must be submitted with TWO supporting documents.
- When correcting the date of birth on a birth record, the affidavit must be submitted with TWO supporting documents. The date being changed must be prior to the date filed.
- When correcting the mother or father listed on the birth record's information, such as the spelling of their name or their date or place of birth, the affidavit must be submitted with ONE supporting document showing the correct information.
- If the hospital listed the sex incorrectly, this can be corrected with an affidavit and a statement from the person's physician on their letterhead that states the person's name, date of birth and their sex. OVR cannot accept any other documents for the incorrect sex. For gender marker corrections that were not clerical errors, please direct customers to OVR.
- When adding a first and/or middle name(s) to a birth record where none is listed, the affidavit must be submitted with TWO supporting documents. The record will not be stamped AMENDED. Birth certificates CANNOT be issued when no first name is listed.
- If sex is blank on the birth record. OVR will accept an affidavit for correction and ONE supporting document that clearly indicates the person's sex. (Marriage license, a child's birth record, a letter from the person's physician or a copy of their driver's license) OVR cannot accept an insurance policy or a letter from their employer. The record will not be stamped AMENDED.

When a Court Order is Needed:

- Completely changing the first, middle, or last name of the certificate holder.
 - An example of this is the certificate holder has interchanged their first and middle names and is going by their middle name on all their forms of ID.
- If the certificate holder has unofficially started going by a new name and has it on their forms of ID.
- When the requestor needs to remove a biological parent from the record.

Correcting Your Vault Copy

Upon receiving notice of a record amendment from OVR, local Clerk and Recorder offices must update their corresponding copy to match the amended state record. Please use the guidelines below to process corrections on county vault copies:

- Death certificates before 2003 and birth certificates before 1997: Notices of corrections will be securely file transferred to the people in your office responsible for making the alteration. The changes must be typewritten on the vault copy, and the affidavits should be kept for future reference.
- Death certificates 2003 forward and birth certificates 1997 forward: When a correction is completed by OVR, the amended certificate will be available to reprint in your queue in VERS. Replace the outdated certificate in your vault with the corrected version and shred the old copy.
- The documentation used to amend a vital record can be requested by any individual eligible to obtain a certified copy of the birth or death certificate. This includes paternity documents, court orders, administrative orders, and affidavits. If an individual asks for this documentation, have them contact OVR.

Variations on Vault Copies vs Database

If a certificate is incorrect in the database but correct in your vault copy, please call OVR to determine whether the customer requires a correction.

Examples of common errors:

- If a person has a middle initial in the database, there is a very good chance that the full middle name is on the vault copy.
- If a person is missing a suffix like Jr., there is a chance that it was put on the original copy but left off the database copy.
- If there is a space in a name or a name is missing a space.
- Typos like Micheal instead of Michael or vice versa.

Birth Records

1907 (and before) to 1996

- Discrepancies should be verified on the original copy in the vault.
- Abstract copies can be issued from VERS after 1920.

1997 and Forward

- The information put into the birth record was submitted by the hospital or midwife, so unless there was a correction/sealed file, the information in the database is the correct version of the certificate.
- Abstract copies and long form certificates can be issued from VERS.

Death Records

1907 (and before) to 2002

- Discrepancies should be verified on the original copy in the vault.
- Certified copies can only be issued from the vault copy.

2003 and Forward

- The information put into the death record was submitted by the medical certifiers, so unless there was a correction, the information in the database is the correct version of the certificate.
- Abstract copies and long form certificates can be issued from VERS.

Creating New Certificates

A new birth certificate will be issued if there has been an adoption, paternity acknowledgment with request for new certificate, new gender marker correction, or if a court orders OVR to create a new certificate. The file number will always remain the same. The original record is no longer a valid certificate and cannot be requested or issued by the county to any party.

When a new certificate is created, a letter and a copy of the new birth certificate will be sent to the Clerk and Recorder. When the Clerk and Recorder receives the letter and certificate, the old Clerk and Recorder's copy should be replaced with the new certificate. The certificate and the letter should be returned to OVR. The original certificate and/or letter should be mailed back to OVR within 30 days.

If the Clerk and Recorder does not have the original certificate, the county should send OVR a signed letter stating that no original certificate will be returned.

New Gender Marker Correction

Currently, changes to the certificate holder's gender on their birth records are allowed. This amendment creates a new birth certificate for the requestor.

Paternity Acknowledgment with Request for New Birth Certificate

If the mother and father are not married and both would like to add the father's name to the birth certificate and change ONLY the child's last name, they can do so using the paternity acknowledgment and the request for a new birth certificate form. These two documents must be submitted at the same time. This type of correction will result in a sealed file and a new certificate.

Paternity

Adding Fathers

If mother and father are married at the time of birth, then the father can be added to the birth certificate by the certifier. There will be no paternity paperwork for this.

If the mother and father are not married at the time of birth, the father can be added with a paternity acknowledgment. If this form is signed and notarized by the hospital or midwife, he can be added at the time of birth. The birth record is kept secure until OVR confirms that the acknowledgment has been correctly completed and sent to OVR.

If the mother and father are not married at birth and either is unwilling or unable to sign the paternity acknowledgment, the father cannot be listed on the birth certificate. A paternity acknowledgment can still be signed and notarized at a later date, and then he would be added with a correction.

If a mother or father is unwilling or unable to sign the paternity acknowledgment, a court order or an administrative order is required to add the father's information to the birth record.

Removing Fathers

If a mother or father has signed a paternity acknowledgment and would like to rescind the acknowledgment, they can do so within 60 days of signing the form. After 60 days, the parent would need a court order to remove the father's name.

If a biological father is listed on the birth record and he or the mother wants his name removed, a court order is needed to take him off.

Nonpaternity

If a mother is married at the time of birth, conception, or in between birth and conception, the husband's name must be entered onto the birth record as the name of the husband unless he and the mother sign an Affidavit of Nonpaternity or the mother has obtained a court order that corrects the certificate.

Many birth records were filed out of compliance as the mother did not want to provide the husband's name and did not have the proper form to remove him. Our offices CANNOT issue these certificates until they are corrected, as they are not in compliance with the law. A vault copy CANNOT be issued. A biological father cannot be added to the record unless the affidavit of nonpaternity is signed and filed or a court order is issued and filed.

If a mother was married to another woman, an affidavit of nonpaternity is not necessary to have the spouse removed as the married woman cannot be the biological father.

Putative Father Registry

OVR maintains the Putative Father Registry. This confidential registry allows a man who believes he may be the father of a child to protect his parental rights and ensure he is notified of any legal proceedings regarding the child, such as a termination of parental rights or an adoption.

If the father submits an application to have his name added to the registry, he will be notified of any court proceedings or child support investigations for that child.

[Registration for Potential Fathers](#)

A mother or someone who is part of the adoption proceedings can request a search of the registry to see if someone has claimed to be the father.

[Putative Father Search Request](#)

[Consent Form for Putative Father Search](#)

[Putative Father Affidavit](#)

Marriage and Divorces

Marriages, divorces, and annulments were first reported to the State in 1943. OVR does not issue these records; only an index is maintained.

Certified copies of marriage certificates and divorce decrees can only be issued from the Clerk of District Court where the application was filed. For example, if a couple was married in Cascade County but purchased the application in Lewis and Clark County, the marriage record could only be issued by the Lewis and Clark Clerk of Court.

While OVR maintains a marriage and divorce index, only marriages and divorces reported to OVR are included in the index.

If a customer wants to search for a marriage or divorce from OVR's index, they can submit an application to OVR with the fee of \$10 and OVR will send them a certified letter with the findings.

To find the contact information and address of the clerks of courts, you can use the following website: [Court Locator](#)

Disinterment Permits

A disinterment permit must be completed and filed using the Department disinterment permit form. Disinterment permit forms are available from the local registrar and will be provided to the registrar by OVR.

The request for disinterment must be made by the next of kin, by an order from a Montana district court with appropriate jurisdiction, or by a public official authorized by law to make such a request. The endorsement on the permit must indicate the source of authority for the request and reasonable cause for the disinterment. If there is a dispute about a disinterment, and all affected parties do not concur, an order from a Montana district court with appropriate jurisdiction directing the disinterment is required.

The permit consists of five copies that must be distributed as follows:

1. The original copy must accompany the body for use by the receiving cemetery or crematory
2. A copy must be retained by the cemetery where the disinterment occurs
3. By the applicant to whom the permit is issued
4. By the local registrar
5. A copy must be sent to the Department

When a Disinterment Permit should be issued:

§ 50-15-407 A body, after burial, may be disinterred for reinterment or transport after a permit is obtained from the local registrar of the jurisdiction where the body is interred.

The main function of OVR regarding disinterment permits is to keep a log of all permits issued, the county the permits were sent to, and when OVR receives the permit back. To whom the permits are issued is the county's responsibility.

If a permit is issued, but not returned, please inform OVR so the permit number can be voided.

The fee for a disinterment permit is \$5. The local registrar will collect the fee, \$2 of which must be remitted to OVR.

Glossary of Terms

A

- **Abstract Copy:** A certified copy of a birth or death record that contains only a summary of the facts (legal name, date, and place) rather than a reproduction of the entire original document. These are typically issued directly from the VERS database.
- **Acknowledgment of Paternity for Legitimation:** An affidavit used when natural parents marry after a child's birth to add the father to the record. This creates a sealed file and a new birth certificate.
- **Administrative Order (AO):** An order from the Child Support Services Division (CSSD) to add or remove a father. These are indexed with "AO" before the affidavit number.
- **Adoption:** The voluntary taking of another child as one's own. Requires a *Certificate of Adoption* and *Final Decree* to create a new birth record.
- **Affidavit:** A written statement sworn under oath before a Notary Public or authorized official (like a County Clerk).
 - **Attendant Affidavit:** Confirms birth facts by someone present at the birth; used for home births or delayed records.
 - **Correction Affidavit:** Used to fix or add missing info on a record.
 - **Paternity Affidavit:** Used by unmarried parents to add the natural father to a record.
 - **Non-Paternity Affidavit:** Signed by a mother and her husband to state that the husband is not a biological father.
- **Altered:** A designation marked on a certificate after original information has been changed.
- **Amendment:** Any alteration or change to a vital record after it has been officially filed.
- **Apostille:** A specialized certificate (per the Hague Convention) that authenticates a document for use in a foreign country. Issued by the Secretary of State.
- **Authorized Representative:** A person designated via notarized document, Power of Attorney, or court appointment to access an individual's records.

C

- **Caretaker Relative:** A relative by blood, marriage, or adoption (not a parent/guardian) who cares for a child. Often uses *Educational* or *Medical Authorization Affidavits*.
- **Certifier:** The person (physician, coroner, etc.) who attests that the facts of a birth or death are true.
- **Certified Copy:** An exact, unaltered duplication of an original record issued on security paper with an official seal and signature.
- **Certifying Official:** The specific individual(s) authorized by OVR or the County to issue certified copies.
- **Common Law Marriage:** A non-ceremonial marriage where parties have the capacity to marry, agree to be married, cohabitate, and represent themselves to the community as married.
- **Coroner:** A public officer who investigates deaths not due to natural causes.

D

- **Death Certifier:** The individual responsible for completing the medical portion of a death certificate, typically a physician, advanced practice registered nurse, or physician assistant.
- **Delayed Birth Certificate:** A record filed more than one year after birth. Cannot be filed for a deceased person.
- **Disinterment Permit:** A \$5.00 permit required to remove remains from a grave or tomb, even if reinterred in the same cemetery.

E

- **EVVE (Electronic Verification of Vital Events):** A national system allowing government offices to instantly confirm the validity of a birth certificate.

F

- **Fetal Death:** Death of a fetus at least 20 weeks gestation or weighing 350+ grams, showing no signs of life at birth.
- **Final Disposition:** The burial, cremation, or removal from the state of a dead body or fetus.
- **Foundling:** An infant of unknown parentage found abandoned.
- **Funeral Director:** A licensed professional who supervises funerals and prepares bodies for disposition.
- **Funeral Home:** An establishment licensed under Title 37, Chapter 19, that is authorized to manage the final disposition of human remains. In the vital records

system, funeral home staff (Funeral Directors) are responsible for initiating the death certificate in VERS and ensuring the medical certifier completes the cause-of-death section within the legal timeframe.

H

- **Homebirth:**
 - **With Midwife:** Entered into the database by the licensed midwife; looks like a hospital record.
 - **Without Midwife:** Parents have one year to file; requires supporting documents and an affidavit.

L

- **Legitimation:** The legal process of establishing a child as "legitimate" when natural parents marry after the birth.
- **Live Birth:** The complete expulsion of a product of conception that shows evidence of life (breathing, heartbeat, or voluntary muscle movement).
- **Local Registrar:** An agent appointed by DPHHS to administer Vital Records laws in a specific area.
- **Long-Form Certificate:** A certified copy that is a verbatim photographic or scanned reproduction of the original vault record. It includes all information from the original filing, including signatures and medical data (subject to redaction rules).

M – P

- **MCA (Montana Code Annotated):** The official compilation of Montana's state laws. Most vital records procedures are governed by Title 50, Chapter 15.
- **Next of Kin:** Spouse, parents, adult children, and adult siblings (or those declared so by a court).
- **Non-Certified Copy:** An informational copy not on security paper and containing no official attestation.
- **Paternity:** The legal establishment of a man as a child's father.
- **Putative Father Registry:** A confidential registry for men who believe they may be the father of a child, ensuring they are notified of legal proceedings (adoption, etc.).

S

- **Safe Haven:** Laws allowing parents to leave unharmed infants with designated persons (making the child a ward of the state) while remaining anonymous.

- **Sealed File:** A confidential file containing the original birth information that has since been replaced by a new certificate (e.g., adoption).
- **Secretary Of State (SOS):** The state-level constitutional officer responsible for commissioning Notaries Public and overseeing the state's business and elections divisions. In the context of Vital Records, the Secretary of State's office is the only entity authorized to issue an Apostille or State Certification for birth or death certificates that are to be used in foreign countries (such as for international adoption, dual citizenship, or overseas employment).
- **State Registrar:** An official hired by the Bureau Chief to direct and oversee the state's Vital Records system. The State Registrar is authorized by law to:
 - Enforce the statutes and administrative rules (MCA and ARM) governing vital records.
 - Prescribe and distribute the official forms and electronic systems used for registration and issue.
 - Direct the activities of local registrars to ensure statewide uniformity and record integrity.
 - Serve as the final authority on the amendment and preservation of Montana's birth, death, and fetal death records.
- **Stillbirth:** A fetal death occurring after 20+ weeks of gestation (excluding abortions).
- **Suspension:** The temporary removal of a certificate from active use.

V

- **VERS (Vital Events Reporting System):** Montana's secure, web-based system used by hospitals, funeral homes, and clerks to register and issue birth and death records.

Forms and Applications

[Birth Certificate Application](#)

[Death Certificate application](#)

[Putative Father Registration](#)

[Putative Father Registry Search](#)

[Affidavit of Correction](#)

[Gender Designation Form](#)

[ART FORM](#)

[Delayed Birth Certificate Application](#)

[Home Birth Application](#)

[Paternity Acknowledgment](#)

[Notice of Withdrawal of Paternity Acknowledgement](#)

[Affidavit of Nonpaternity](#)

[Paternity Legitimation Form](#)

[Request for a Birth Certificate with Paternity Acknowledgment](#)

[Name Change Petitions for Court Orders](#)