

The material in this handout represents general legal principles. The law is continually changing; although the information in the handout was current as of the date it was drafted, some provisions in this pamphlet may have changed. It is always best to consult an attorney about your legal rights and responsibilities regarding your particular case.

Offutt Law Office: (402)-294-3668

[HTTPS://AFLEGALASSISTANCE.LAW.AF.MIL](https://aflegalassistance.law.af.mil)

Legal Name Change

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The process for changing your name varies based on state law and the basis for the name change, but generally follows these three steps, in order:

1. Some action, endorsed by the government, approving the name change;
2. Changing your name with the Social Security Administration; then
3. Working through the various state and local processes to change your name.

Because the processes vary, this handout attempts to generally describe the process. Check with your local court and/or legal assistance attorney for jurisdiction-specific information.

Based on Personal Preference

Most states require you to file a petition for a change of name in the county court in the state in which you are a legal resident. *See the legal assistance website under the "Taxation" folder for additional information about residency and domicile.*

Each jurisdiction will have different rules on the requirements of the name change application. For example, some jurisdictions require a reason for the name change whereas others might restrict the names you can assume. Once you receive approval of the court to change your name, your next step should be updating your information with the Social Security Administration (SSA). The Administration's instructions for navigating this process are available at <https://faq.ssa.gov/en-US/Topic/article/KA-01981>.

Once you receive a new social security card with your updated name you can begin the process of changing all other legal documents and records that reflect your old name. This includes your passport; driver's license; voter registration; deeds to your home(s), vehicle(s), boat(s), etc.; banking and credit accounts; etc.

Based on Marriage or Divorce

In this scenario, the government action takes the form of a marriage certificate or divorce decree. For divorce, specifically, a party who anticipates requiring a name change following the divorce should request the family law court include an order to return to a maiden name as part of the divorce decree.

From here, the process is generally the same as set forth above. The individual should take their marriage certificate, or divorce decree, to the SSA to initiate that process then proceed through all other necessary government entities.

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Name Change for a Minor Child

While the process follows the same steps as for a change based on personal preference, a parent may have to take the added step of seeking the other biological parent's permission to make the change. Even when the other parent refuses to give their permission, the family court may nevertheless order the change under certain circumstances.

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