THE Abortion Survivors NETWORK

How to Search for Adoption Records and Biological Family Members

How do I search for my adoption records and biological family?

We know that searching for your adoption records and biological family can be a complex and emotional process. One of the most valuable resources in this search is your adoptive family, if you have a relationship with them. They may or may not have undocumented facts and information given to them by your birth family during the adoption process. At The Abortion Survivors Network, we encourage communication with those around you to help you with your search. We know this is not always a viable option but it is a valuable resource when it can be used.

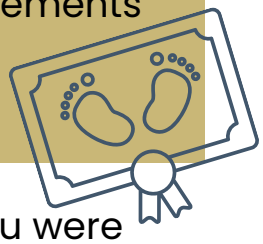
You may or may not have medical records due to the circumstances surrounding your birth, but the first step in finding out vital information is to contact the adoption agency or social services agency that facilitated your adoption to inquire for documentation surrounding your birth and/or adoption plan process with your birth parents. Many adoption agencies have three specific types of adoption plans made. These are: open adoption,

semi-open adoption, or a closed adoption. The type of adoption plan made by your birth parents will determine how much information an agency may or may not be able to provide you with.

Websites such as Ancestry.com, 23andMe, and MyHeritage offer DNA testing services that can also help you connect with biological relatives. These services can also help you build a family tree and search for other relatives. If you're able to identify a relative, such as a birth parent or sibling, consider reaching out to them through social media or a letter to introduce yourself and express your desire to connect. Keep in mind that you can't control how other people respond to you or how the situation will go, but you can control how you approach them and how you handle their response.

How do I search for my birth record (certificate)?

These steps fit the experiences of anyone searching for their birth records (certificate), such as an adoptee. For abortion survivors, we are often searching for birth records for multiple pieces of information—statements about the abortion attempt occurring, details about the abortion, or identification of one or both biological parents.



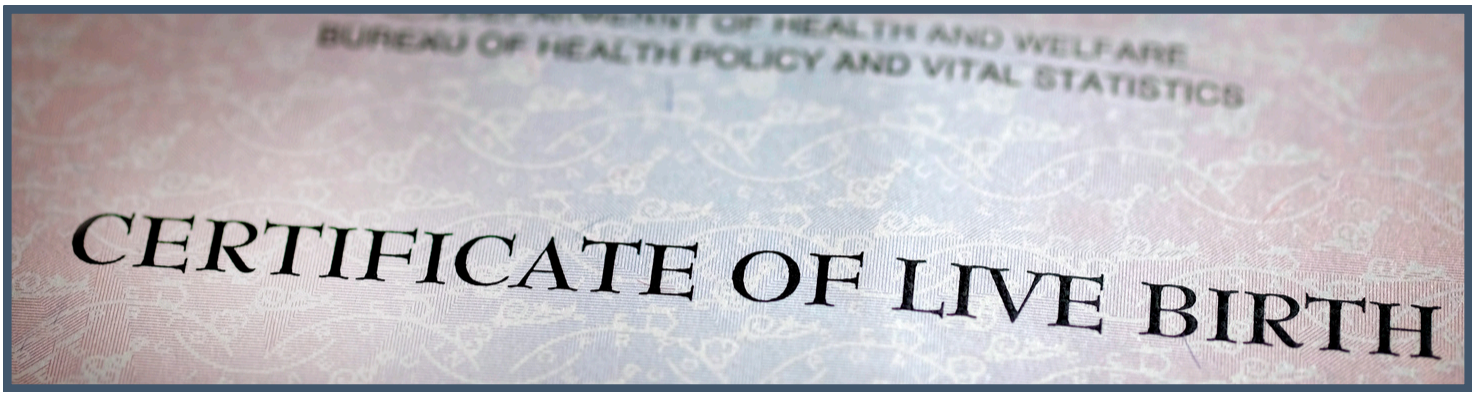
To begin searching, you need to determine the jurisdiction where you were born–this could be a city, county, or state. Contact the vital records office in that jurisdiction. Vital records offices are typically located within the state or local government. Ask the vital records office what documentation you need to provide to obtain a copy of your birth certificate. You may need to provide identification and/or proof of relationship. Follow the instructions provided by the vital records office to obtain a copy of your birth certificate. There may be a fee associated with obtaining a copy.

If you are unable to locate your birth records through the vital records office, you may want to consider contacting a professional genealogist or private investigator who specializes in birth record searches. They may be able to assist you in locating your birth records through alternative means. Note that these services usually come with a fee, although there are some "angel" organizations and searchers who assist for free.

What states release birth certificates with an original birth name on it?

The laws surrounding the release of original birth certificates (OBCs) and the inclusion of original birth names vary by state in the United States. In addition, some states have laws that allow access to OBCs under certain circumstances, such as if the birth parent has given their consent or if the adoptee is over a certain age. It's important to note that laws can change, so it's always a good idea to check with the state's vital records office or a reputable adoption search and support organization for the most up-to-date information.

This website is an excellent resource for adoptees on the right to obtain your own original birth certificate and will contain the most up to date information on which states allow for this. As of September 2024, only 14 states allow for this: https://adopteerightslaw.com/maps/.



Can I petition the court for non-identifying information in my adoption records?

Petitioning the court can be done through a letter or form, to release information to you from your adoption records held within the jurisdiction in which your adoption occurred. Some abortion survivor adoptees petition the court seeking information that leads to their biological parents. Non-identifying information doesn't typically include names/dates, but it does often include information about them that adds to the "puzzle" that you're putting together to ultimately find them. Some abortion survivor adoptees also petition the court for this information in the hopes that it includes information about the attempted abortion. The information that is

passed along can vary depending on the state or country you reside in. However, here are some general steps you can follow:

1) Research the laws in your state or country regarding access to non-identifying information. Some states or countries have specific laws regarding the release of adoption-related information, including non-identifying information.

2) Contact the court where your adoption was finalized (in the U.S., this is the county where it was finalized) to find out if they have any forms or procedures for requesting non-identifying information— in many counties, this is simply a letter you send to the presiding county judge there. Complete the necessary forms and provide any required documentation, such as proof of your identity and/or adoption. Be sure to follow the instructions carefully and include all relevant information.

3) File the petition with the court and await a response. It may take some time for the court to review and process your petition. If your petition is granted, you should receive a copy of your non-identifying information. If it is denied, you may have the option to appeal the decision or explore other legal avenues for obtaining the information.

Are there any registries I can join to be united with my biological parent(s)?

There are several registries and databases that exist to help adoptees and birth parents connect. Here are a few examples:

- International Soundex Reunion Registry (ISRR) - A free mutual-consent registry that helps reunite family members separated by adoption, divorce, or other circumstances.
- Adoption.com Reunion Registry - A free registry that allows adoptees, birth parents, and siblings to search for each other and connect.
- The Search Angel Program - A volunteer network of experienced search angels who provide assistance and support to those searching for their biological families.
- Ancestry.com - A commercial genealogy website that offers DNA testing services and tools to help individuals build family trees and connect with biological relatives.
- 23andMe - Another commercial DNA testing service that offers genetic testing and tools for connecting with biological relatives.

The sites and registries recommended above are the ones we have the most experience with and there are likely more options available. It's always a good idea to do your research, seek out reputable resources and support from trusted organizations or professionals. Especially in the case where people are requiring a fee for their services, it's important to research their background, ask for references, and ask for examples of their successes (and even failures) in an effort to vet each organization.

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