

ARROWOOD LAW

CHARLIE ARROWOOD, ESQ

Post Name Change Instructions – Adults in NYC and NYS

Congratulations on legally changing your name! Now that you have changed your name through the court, you will need to make sure that government agencies and private entities are aware of your new name.

A certified copy of the name change order is the document you will use as proof of the new name. In general, do not give away certified copies of your name change order. Show the order and take it back or provide a photocopy. If photocopying the name change order, **do not remove the receipt or the staples**. It invalidates the certification. You can also scan the order and print out copies.

Social Security

Note 1: Under COVID-19 procedures, Social Security is closed to non-emergency in-person services. All name and gender marker changes are being done by mail.

Note 2: Social Security will return your originals to you before you receive your actual card; this means your request has been processed. You do not need to wait for your actual card to change other documents in most cases.

X gender markers are currently not available on Social Security records. The Social Security Administration has put out guidance instructing employees to accept documents with X markers as proof of identity for purposes of establishing a new Social Security number, so new parents who choose to designate X on their child's birth certificate are now able to obtain an initial Social Security number for the child using their X birth certificate, but the record itself must say M or F.

By mail: Mail your SS-5, certified copy of a name change order, original doctor's letter (if changing gender marker), and [this](#) internal guidance *with Section D highlighted*, and a photocopy of your ID to your Social Security office. You do *not* need to include ID because the name change order is a proof of identity. Find your local Social Security office [here](#).

People who live in NYC must use a Card Center to get a replacement card, although it need not be the one in your borough. These are the best offices to go through:

- Manhattan, 123 William Street, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10038
- Brooklyn, 154 Pierrepont Street, 6th Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Mail the following documents to the office:

- A completed SS-5 form (see below for instructions on filling this out);
- A certified copy of your name change order (they look at it but do not keep it);
- Doctor's letter to change the sex (refer to attached sample letter) or passport or birth certificate with the correct sex, if applicable;
- Photocopy of unexpired photo ID, such as a drivers' license, state ID, or passport (can be in your old name);

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- [This](#) internal guidance *with Section D highlighted*.

Filling out the form

- ✓ Use Form SS-5, Application for a Social Security Card, the same form used for applying for a new card. They have the forms at the office, so fill it out while you wait, or you can download it [here](#).
- ✓ In the first blank, “name to be shown on card,” put your new legal name. List your name at birth on the line below that.
- ✓ Leave the “other names used” section blank unless you have changed your name legally before.
- ✓ Select the new sex if you have the letter from your doctor.
- ✓ You do not need to list your parents’ Social Security numbers.

Ask to speak with a supervisor if there is any problem. The change is effective within 24 hours, and you will receive your new Social Security card in the mail in about 2 weeks. There is no cost.

Changing a Social Security number

Your number will remain the same. Social Security numbers are typically changed only when one can present evidence documenting harassment or abuse. You can apply at your local office. Visit <http://ssa.gov/pubs/10093.html> for more information.

DMV

To change your driver’s license or NY state ID, visit a local DMV branch. Branches are requiring an appointment at this time: <https://dmv.ny.gov/offices/dmv-office-locations>.

Note: Due to the Real ID Act, the DMV may tell you that you need to update Social Security before they will update DMV records, but **that is not the case**. If you are told you must update Social Security first, ask to speak with a supervisor – your name change order should be satisfactory.

Bring the following documents:

- Proof of your identity.
 - If you already have a New York State driver’s license or ID card (current or expired less than two years ago), that is all you need to get a new ID.
 - If you do not currently have a NY license or ID, you will need your Social Security card, proof of date of birth, and four “points” worth of ID. To avoid a wasted trip, review the ID requirements before going to the DMV: <http://www.dmv.ny.gov/forms/id44.pdf>. People under 21 can get a parental statement of identity (<https://dmv.ny.gov/forms/mv45.pdf>) if you cannot otherwise prove your identity.
 - Your proof of identity can be in your old or new name.
- A certified copy of your name change order (they look at it, but do not keep it).

You no longer need a doctor’s letter to change the sex designation on your DMV ID.

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Information about the cost of [driver's licenses/permits](#) and [non-driver IDs](#) is available on the DMV's website.

Filling out the form

- ✓ Use form MV-44, which you can obtain at the DMV or download [here](#).
- ✓ Fill out the top part of the form with your new name. List your old name in the box that asks about former names.
- ✓ Check the box for the sex that you want on your ID. Then, in the box marked Other Change, write that you are changing the sex.
- ✓ To update your **voter registration record**, fill out page 3!

You should update your insurance card before going to the DMV. If you have a car registered in your name, DMV will require you to update those documents at the same time that you replace your driver's license.

Ask to speak with a supervisor if there is any problem. The DMV will give you a new temporary non-photo ID right away and will mail you your permanent one in 2-6 weeks.

X gender markers are currently not available on NY DMV-issued IDs.

IDNYC card

To change the name on a NYC municipal ID card, make an appointment at any [enrollment center](#) and bring your old card along with a certified copy of your name change order. The gender on an IDNYC card is self-designated, so you can change it without a doctor's letter. Options include male, female, nonbinary (X), and no designation. The IDNYC card is available to New York City residents ages 10 and up.

U.S. Passport: an alternative to a birth certificate

If you are unable to update the sex on your birth certificate, you can use a passport in many situations where you might need to show a birth certificate. You can get the sex designation changed on a passport by self-attestation (filling out the appropriate marker on the form). The State Department no longer requires a doctor's letter, surgery, or hormones. X gender markers are currently not available on passports but the State Department anticipates that they will be available in 2022.

For an additional \$55, you can also get a passport card (a wallet-sized card not valid for international air travel) with your correct name and sex designation (\$165 total). See our separate checklist for the documents you will need to apply for or correct a U.S. passport.

Entry and TSA Pre✓

If you will be travelling regularly, consider getting a Global Entry card, which costs \$100 and is valid for 5 years. In addition to streamlining the return from international travel, it enables you to enroll in TSA Pre✓, which **allows you to bypass the body scanners** (and long security lines) on all flights. Wait to apply until after you get the corrected passport. You will need to go in person to have a photo taken

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and be fingerprinted. If you know you will not be travelling internationally, TSA Pre✓ alone is \$85 for 5 years. Begin by [applying online](#).

If you already have a Global Entry card, you must visit a [Global Entry enrollment center](#) to update your name and gender in the system in addition to updating your passport. Once you get the passport back, you can log into your account and confirm that they've updated it.

It is not necessary to update the physical card because it does not ever need to be presented anywhere, but it can be used instead of a passport for land and sea entries. If you wish to change the physical card, call to make an appointment (212) 344-2296. The new card fee is \$25.

Selective Service

If you are registered with Selective Service and are under 26, you must change your name with them within **ten days** of your legal name change. You will be mailed a new card. Only people assigned male at birth must register. If you were assigned male at birth, you must register upon turning 18 even if you have changed your sex designation to female prior to that time. If you are between the ages of 18-25, you can [register online](#). People assigned female at birth may request an exemption letter [here](#).

To change your name, use the form that came with your card or send Selective Service a letter including your full name, Social Security Number, Selective Service Number, and date of birth, as well as your mailing address. Sign and date your Selective Service card and include it. You must include a **photocopy** (it need not be a certified copy) of your name change order with the letter.

Mail to: Registration Information Office
 Selective Service System
 Data Management Center
 P.O. Box 94638
 Palatine, IL 60094-4638

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Schools

Show the registrar's office a copy of the name change order. Oftentimes schools that have updated records previously will maintain the legal name in a private file, so provide a photocopy of the name change order and make sure they completely update their records. They may want to see a corrected passport or birth certificate to do so. If a public school refuses to update a record, inform them they are obligated to comply with a name change order under [§ 64\(3\) of the New York State Gender Recognition Act](#). If they continue to refuse, you can [file a complaint](#) with the New York State Division of Human Rights (or if the school is in NYC, the [New York City Commission on Human Rights](#)).

Health insurance

You can write a letter to the insurance company and include a photocopy of the name change order. You can call the number on your card to find out what documentation they require to change the sex designation. You may be asked to provide a corrected birth certificate, or they may automatically update the sex designation when they update the name. Make sure that doctors' offices submit bills under the corrected name and sex designation. As with public schools, insurers are obligated to comply with a name change order and should not be requiring additional documentation (like an updated photo ID) before changing their records.

Note: It is unlawful in New York for an insurer to deny coverage for sex-specific care based on the gender marker they have on file. If coverage for sex-specific care is denied, call your insurance company and tell them about the error. They will be able to add a code to your file to make sure you are not denied in the future. If the problem continues, [file a complaint with the New York State Department of Financial Services](#).

Credit reporting agencies

As you update your name with creditors (people/companies you owe money to), they will send the new information to the credit bureaus. However, in order to maintain your credit history, you should inform the three major credit bureaus of your name change directly. Each has its own procedure and none are completely reliable, so keep an eye on your credit report for several months after changing your name. You may lose credit history or they may create duplicate files with your old name and new name. If they do not resolve the issue, you should [file a complaint with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau](#).

Equifax has an [online dispute portal](#) where you can upload your name change order.

[TransUnion](#) recommends that you mail a photocopy of your name change and cover letter to them at TransUnion Consumer Solutions, PO Box 2000, Chester PA 19016. Check their website for additional information about what must be included in the cover letter.

[Experian](#) simply tells you to update your name with creditors, but you should also mail a photocopy of your name change and cover letter (you can use the same one you use for TransUnion) to them at Experian, PO Box 4500, Allen TX 75013.

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Financial & estate planning documents

It is best to change your name where it appears in wills or is listed as a beneficiary for an IRA, life insurance policy, etc.

Other places to change your name

You will need to change your name with places like banks, credit cards, student loans, etc. You can change your name at these places by visiting them in person and presenting a copy of your name change order or by writing letters/sending emails.

When writing a letter, include your address and any account numbers, and request that they change your name from your old name to your new one. Enclose a photocopy of your name change order. Most businesses do not require a certified copy. **When photocopying your name change order, do not remove the receipt or the staples.**

Getting additional copies of the name change order

You will probably not need any additional certified copies (do not give them away lightly) because most places will simply review and return the original. However, you can obtain additional certified copies of your name change order from the clerk's office in the county where the order was issued. Name change files that have been sealed may require getting a temporary unsealing order if the requestor is not the petitioner (and sometimes even if it is), so it is best to avoid giving away certified copies. Contact charlie@arrowood.law if you need a sample unsealing request.

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Sample Doctor's Letter for Sex Designation Changes

This letter meets federal requirements to change the sex designation with Social Security and on immigration documents. It does **not** need to be notarized.

NOTE: Currently, an X gender marker is **not** available on NY state photo IDs (until May/June 2022) or federal documents (availability on passports is anticipated in 2022). An X gender marker is available on NY State and New York City birth certificates, and the IDNYC Card. The gender marker on New York City and NY state birth certificates can be changed by self-attestation (without a doctor's letter) using the designated forms, available [here](#).

Sample letter meeting federal government requirements:

Date

I, [Physician's Full Name], am the physician of [Chosen Name of Patient a/k/a Current Legal Name], DOB: [Date of Birth], with whom I have a doctor/patient relationship and whom I have treated [or with whom I have a doctor/patient relationship and whose medical history I have reviewed and evaluated].

[Chosen Name of Patient] has had appropriate clinical treatment for gender transition to the new gender of [specify male or female].

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the forgoing is true and correct.

Signature of Physician

Typed Name of Physician

[issuing U.S. State/Foreign Country of medical license/certificate & physician's medical license or certificate number]

Requirements for this letter:

- Printed on **letterhead** that includes:
 - Physician's address
 - Telephone number
- Signed by an **MD** or **DO**
- Provide **three original copies** to the patient.
 - Photocopies and scans are not acceptable.
 - Ideally, sign in blue ink.

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Sample Letter Requesting a Private Entity to Change Your Name

*When writing to private entities, use only a **photocopy** of the name change order, not a certified copy.*

[your name, address, & phone number]

[date]

[name & address of company]

Re: Request to change name [on account #]

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to request a name change on my [health insurance, bank account, etc.], account number [account/member number] from [old name] to [new name]. Please also update the title from [Ms. to Mr.].

Enclosed is a photocopy of my name change court order.

[If relevant] Please also update the sex designation on your records from [female/male/X to female/male/X]. Enclosed is a copy of a doctor's letter documenting this change.

If you have any questions, please call me at the number above. Thank you for your prompt attention to my request.

Sincerely,

[your new name]

Enclosure