

OBTAINING COPIES OF MAINE VITAL RECORDS

Questions & Answers

1. How do I obtain copies of birth, death, fetal death, marriage, divorce, and domestic partnership records?

By law, Maine birth records less than 75 years old, marriage records less than 50 years old, death records less than 25 years old and fetal deaths less than 50 years old are considered to be private. In order to inspect these documents, or to obtain copies, an individual must prove that they are permitted by law to do so. Those authorized to view or obtain a copy of a vital record include:

- The person named on the record,
- The person's spouse or registered domestic partner,
- The parent(s) named on the record,
- Descendants of the person named on the record (including children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren to the most remote degree),
- The legal custodian, guardian, or authorized representative of the person named on the record, and
- Genealogists who have a researcher card issued by the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Data, Research and Vital Statistics.

Effective July 12, 2010, all individuals requesting copies of these records must present positive identification and, if requesting the record of a parent or grandparent and you are not a registered genealogist, proof of direct lineage.

Registered genealogists may only obtain a non-certified copy of a record, unless they can meet the above requirements for obtaining a certified copy. They may only view or obtain a copy of a birth, death, or marriage record.

Birth records 75 years or older, marriage records 50 years or older, death records 25 years or older and fetal deaths 50 years or older are considered public records and informational copies can be issued to anyone requesting them.

2. Why do I need to present positive identification when requesting a record?

While most requests for vital records are honest attempts to obtain one's own personal documentation, some are not; some are attempts to obtain information and documents needed to assume another person's identity. These documents can be used to obtain a driver's license, state photo ID, social security card, and passport under the assumed name, opening the door to credit card, bank and tax fraud; mail theft, and social security and insurance fraud. The requirement that you provide positive identification when requesting a copy of a record helps to protect you and your family from this type of crime.

3. What are acceptable forms of identification?

Acceptable forms of identification include a driver's license, passport or other government issued photo identification.

4. What if I do not have an acceptable photo ID?

If you do not have acceptable photo identification, you may present two items with your name on it from the following list: a utility bill, a bank statement, a car registration, a copy of an income tax return, a personal check with address, a previously issued vital record or marriage license, a letter from a government agency requesting a vital record (for example, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services), a Department of Corrections identification card, a Social Security card, a DD214, a hospital birth worksheet, a license or rental agreement, a pay stub (W-2), a voter registration card, a Social Security disability award letter, a Medicare or Medicaid insurance card, and a school or employee photo ID. Other forms of identification listing your name, date of birth, and address may also be considered.

5. How would a person demonstrate direct lineage?

In order to prove direct lineage when requesting records concerning your parents or grandparents, a copy of your birth certificate will identify your parents. If your parents were married, this document can be used to obtain a copy of your parents' marriage record, which should identify your grandparents.

Other acceptable proof of direct lineage could include a hospital or physician's record of birth or death, a baptismal record, school enrollment records, military records, court records, a family bible record; a newspaper engagement, marriage or birth announcement; an obituary, a U.S. Census enumeration record, an insurance application, or an affidavit.

6. How do I obtain a genealogical researcher ID card?

In order to obtain a genealogical research ID card you have to apply to the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Data, Research and Vital Statistics. You can find a link for the application on the Vital Records website listed as Genealogical Research Application.