



Name Change & Official Army Personnel Records



Can I Change My Name?

Most likely, so long as you have a good reason for it. This generally means that your change of name can't interfere with the rights of others, and it can't be for a wrongful or fraudulent purpose. So, for instance, all states allow an ex-wife to resume her maiden name after a divorce, and many states would allow a citizen to change his name to "Ochocinco" or "Metta World Peace" simply because he thought it better reflected his character.

In some states, though, there are other limitations. North Carolina, for instance, won't let you change your name outside of a divorce more than once, and the state requires that you prove your good character, so it knows that you're not seeking a name change to avoid the law. Check with an attorney about your state's law.

How do I Change My Name?

The best practice – and the practice required in most states – is to file a Petition for a Name Change in your local court. The court will likely publish your intention to change your name so everyone has the opportunity to object (this is for creditors and the police and others who you might owe). After a short waiting period, the court will officially change your name by notifying the correct state records office.

Some states, however, allow you to change your name without going to court. You'll want to ask an attorney about what your state requires before you do this, though.

Note that even after a name change with your state you'll still need to change your name with the Social Security Administration, with the Army, and possibly with other people or agencies that have your name on record. You'll also want to confirm that your vital records – e.g. your birth certificate, passport – reflect the name change. There's more information on the back of this sheet.

What if I'm Getting a Divorce?

In every state, you can resume your maiden name after a divorce. The process is normally simpler than the ordinary name change because it can be part of the divorce. That is, you can include in your divorce papers a request that your name be changed, and the judge can grant your request as part of the divorce.

Is There Anything Special I Need To Do With The Army?

Yes. Check out Army Regulation 600-8-104, Military Personnel Information Management/Records, Chapter 6, Section VIII. It outlines Army procedure and documentation requirements (e.g., marriage certificate, naturalization certificate, court order) for changing an individual's name in official Army records.

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<i>This information paper is one of a series of informative handouts containing general information on topics that legal assistance attorneys frequently advise on. Information provided is general in nature and does not constitute legal advice. Consult an attorney for specific legal advice for your particular situation. This information paper is distributed to persons eligible for legal assistance under 10 USC 1044.</i>		

CHANGING YOUR NAME LEGALLY

<p>Marriage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Form SS-5: "Application for a Social Security Card" (available at www.ssa.gov) • Provide proof of legal name change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Certified copy of marriage certificate • Provide proof of identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Must show former name and identifying info ○ Photo ID works best • Take/mail completed application and documents to local Social Security office 	<p>Divorce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Form SS-5: "Application for a Social Security Card" (available at www.ssa.gov) • Provide proof of legal name change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Certified copy of divorce decree that includes restoration of former name • Provide proof of identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Must show former name and identifying info ○ Photo ID works best • Take/mail completed application and documents to local Social Security office
<p>Naturalization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Form SS-5: "Application for a Social Security Card" (available at www.ssa.gov) • Provide proof of legal name change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Certificate of Naturalization, showing new name • Provide proof of identity - 2 forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One with former name (can be expired) ○ One with new name (must not be expired) • Take/mail completed application and documents to local Social Security office 	<p>Court Order or Adoption:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Form SS-5: "Application for a Social Security Card" (available at www.ssa.gov) • Provide proof of legal name change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Certified copy of court order • Provide proof of identity - 2 forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One with former name (can be expired) ○ One with new name (must not be expired) • Take/mail completed application and documents to local Social Security office

** All documents **MUST** be certified copies or originals. Notarized copies will NOT be accepted.

** If U.S. citizenship has not been previously established with the Social Security Administration, you must also present proof of U.S. citizenship, in addition to the above documents.

When you receive your new Social Security Card, you'll need to change your name with other agencies and on other documents, to reflect your new name:

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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employer - DMV - driver's license - Other ID cards - Banks - Credit cards - Passport - Post Office | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doctor/Dentist/other service providers - Health insurance providers - School loans/registration - Magazines/other subscriptions - Any other financial/government agencies/documents |
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