

How to request a name change in Illinois©

July, 2011



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Disclaimer — Please read

This packet of information was prepared to answer general questions and give general advice about the law in Illinois. This packet may or may not also include forms that you can use. When reading this packet or using the forms, keep in mind that the advice, information, and forms were created to assist readers with general issues, not specific situations, and as such does not replace the advice or representation of an attorney licensed to practice in the State of Illinois. Because of this and because of unanticipated changes in the law, the School of Law at Southern Illinois University and the person, institution, or agency who gave you this packet make no claim as to whether the use of this packet will achieve the result you desire and disclaim any responsibility for the consequences of any form prepared or action taken in reliance upon the information in this packet. If you are concerned or do not understand whether this packet will be of assistance to you or will apply to your specific situation, you should talk to an attorney who is licensed to practice in the State of Illinois. If you have any questions about this disclaimer, call the Self Help Legal Center.

Look for these symbols to tell you when to:



STOP!

You need legal representation or advice to continue.



USE CAUTION!

This is very important so pay attention.



GO!

You can proceed to the next step.



CHECK IT OUT!

This issue is discussed in another packet.

Warning to all readers



Before you proceed with using this packet, you should ask yourself the following questions:

1. Have I tried to consult a private attorney?

No self-help publication, packet, or form can replace the advice and experience of a licensed attorney. An attorney may not cost as much as you think, especially if you just need to ask questions. Before you proceed on your own, call several local attorneys, compare prices, and find out whether you can pay an attorney or not.

2. If I cannot afford an attorney, have I tried to find a free source of legal assistance?

There are several agencies which provide legal assistance for free to certain groups of individuals. Some of these agencies are listed to the right. While they may not be able to help you with a particular problem, it does not hurt to call them to find out before you proceed on your own.

3. Is this something that I can do on my own?

If you have trouble following directions, or have difficulty reading, writing, or speaking in public, you may not be able to follow the directions and advice in this packet. If this is the case, find a friend or someone who can help you before you proceed on your own.

Free sources of legal help

Land Of Lincoln Legal Assistance

Serves the 65 southernmost counties in Illinois

Toll Free: 877-342-7891

For additional information, you may visit their website at

[Http://www.lollaf.org](http://www.lollaf.org)

Prairie State Legal Services

Serves most of northern and north central Illinois outside of Cook County

815-965-2134

800-331-0617

Coordinated Advice and Referral Program for Legal Services

serving Cook County

312-738-9200

Will County Legal Assistance

Serving Will County

815-727-5123



It is very important that you read each section of this packet completely before you take any action in regard to a legal problem including using any forms that supplement this packet.

Because this packet discusses terms and actions you are likely not familiar with, you will need to refer back to the following sections from time to time when reading this packet:

People you should know

This section describes people that you may come into contact with in regard to a particular legal problem. It is important that you understand who these people are and what they do and don't do.

What these legal terms mean

This section defines commonly used legal terms in words that you can understand. To use the rest of this packet and any supplemental forms, you need to understand exactly what these terms mean.

Summary of the law in this area

This section contains summaries of important areas of the law that you need to know.

How to file a document in a court file

This section answers commonly asked questions about filing documents.

Myths and Tips

These two sections discuss commonly held misbeliefs about the law and steps that you should take (or not take) that could make your task easier.



Who these people are



Judge:

The judge is the person who presides over the courtroom. In most cases, including child support cases, the judge makes all of the final decisions and approves all agreements. When a judge makes a decision or a finding, it has the force of law. The judge also sets and enforces court rules (like dress codes) and in some courthouses, the judge decides when cases are scheduled.



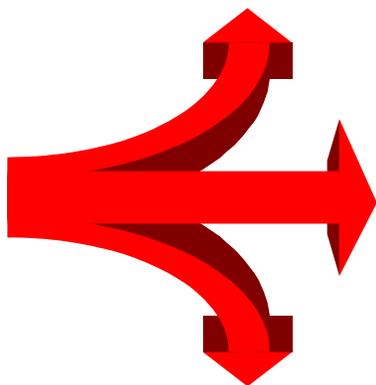
Circuit Clerk:

The Circuit Clerk is responsible for creating, managing, and updating court files. When you want to put something in a court file, see a court file, or make a copy of something in a court file, you talk to the Circuit Clerk's staff. In some courthouses, the Circuit Clerk also decides when cases are scheduled.



Attorney:

An attorney is someone who can help you with your legal problem by providing you with advice about the law, the legal system, and the merits of your case. An attorney can act as your advocate and can represent you in court and in negotiation settlements.



Returning to your maiden name after a divorce:

Under Illinois law, you can return to your maiden name after a divorce if you requested your maiden name in your divorce petition and this relief was granted to you in your divorce judgment. Most agencies, like the Illinois Secretary of State, will require a certified copy of your divorce judgment before they will change your name. To get a certified copy of your divorce judgment, contact the Circuit Clerk of the courthouse where your divorce judgment is filed. There is usually a charge for getting a certified copy.



For a discussion on how to get a divorce, consult Packet #1 of the Divorce/Separation Series.

Who cannot use this packet



Warning: Please read



The following groups of people cannot or should not use this packet:

Group One: minors or family members.

This packet and the separate packet with related forms -- *How to Request a Name Change in Illinois-Supplement* - has been prepared to help you change your name only. A petitioner may also ask the court to change the name of his or her spouse or adult unmarried children with their consent, if they also satisfy the residency requirements, and subject to the other limitations stated here. Changing the name of a minor is more complicated, requiring additional steps and the court to make a finding that it is in the best interests of the minor to do so. The criteria are set out in Act 5, Section 21-101 of Chapter 735 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes (commonly listed as 735 ILCS 5/21-101; available for review online at <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs.asp>). Forms and explanations about petitioning to change the name of a minor are available without charge at <http://www.illinoislegalaid.org>

Group Two: Persons convicted of identity crimes or certain sex/solicitation crimes

If you have been convicted in this or in any other State of any of the following crimes/ misdemeanors and have not been pardoned, you cannot file a petition for name change in Illinois:

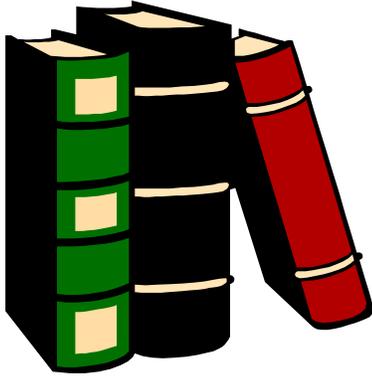
- identity theft or aggravated identity theft;
- felony or misdemeanor criminal sexual abuse when the victim of the offense at the time of its commission is under 18 years of age;
- felony or misdemeanor sexual exploitation of a child, indecent solicitation of a child, or indecent solicitation of an adult;
- any other offense for which a person is required to register under the Sex Offender Registration Act, 730 ILCS 150/1 et. seq., in Illinois, or any other state.

Group Three: Persons convicted of other felonies

A person convicted of a felony not included as part of Group Two (above) in Illinois or any other state cannot file a petition for a name change unless he or she has been pardoned or at least 10 years have passed since completion and discharge from his or her sentence.

Other publications on changing your name

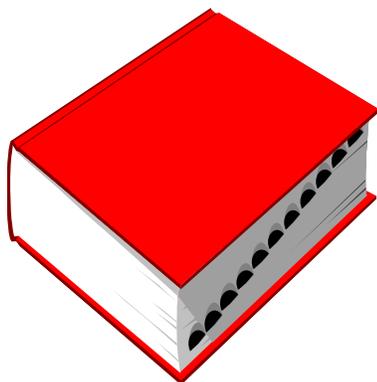
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Disclaimer: Please Read!

The following is a list of publications which discuss the issues of name changes. Some of these publications are specific to Illinois and others are more general in nature. Because of this and because of unanticipated changes in the law, the School of Law at Southern Illinois University and the person, institution, or agency who gave you this packet make no claim as to the accuracy of the content of these publications including whether they will achieve the result you desire. The School of Law at Southern Illinois University and the person, institution, or agency who gave you this packet disclaim any responsibility for the consequences of any action taken in reliance upon the information in these publications. If you are concerned or do not understand whether a particular publication will be of assistance to you or will apply to your specific situation, you should talk to the publication's publisher or an attorney who is licensed to practice in the State of Illinois. If you have any questions about this disclaimer, call the Self Help Legal Center.

At the time we printed this packet, there were no self help publications which we were aware of which discussed this topic. Consult your local public or law library to see if there are any new publications on this topic. For the most recent information, consult the Self Help Legal Center.



affidavit

A sworn statement by a person. Lying in an affidavit can result in a charge of perjury which could mean a fine, imprisonment, or both.

circuit

The judicial system in Illinois is divided into circuits. Each circuit defines a geographic area in Illinois.

defendant

A person who is sued.

divorce

The end of a marriage. The legal proceedings that you go through to end your marriage, divide property and debt and determine the custody and visitation for your minor child(ren).

hearing (trial)

An opportunity for both parties to tell the judge or jury their side of a dispute. Some hearings are court ordered so missing them can result in being held in contempt of court. For hearings which are not court ordered, failure to appear can result in the other side getting what they want in relief.

judgment

A final decision or order of the court.

jurisdiction

Whether the court in a particular state has the power to hear a case or to order someone to do something depends upon whether it has "jurisdiction". Jurisdiction can be either over a person or over a thing. For a state court to have jurisdiction over a person, generally, the person must either reside in the state or have committed an act in the state that gave rise to the case.

minor children

Children under the age of eighteen.

motion

A written or oral request to the judge after a lawsuit has been started (see petition).

What these legal words mean

notary public

A person who verifies that a signature on a document is made by the person whose signature appears. The notary public does not verify the content of the document itself.

petition

A written request to the court. A petition usually starts a lawsuit and contains the facts that one person alleges has happened along with the relief that they are requesting from the court.

plaintiff or petitioner

The person who starts a lawsuit.

pro-se

A person who is not represented by an attorney and is involved as a party in a lawsuit.

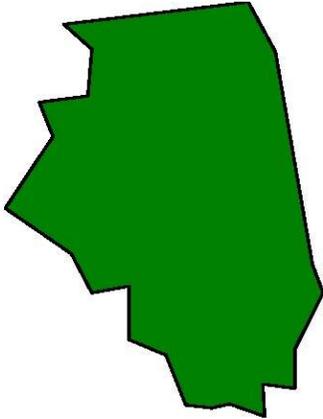
serve or service

The process where a person is officially notified of a pending lawsuit.

statute

The law that the state legislature or federal government enacted on a particular subject.

Summary of the law in this area



The law which governs name changes in Illinois is the Illinois Code of Civil Procedure. It can be found in Act 5, Section 21-101 of Chapter 735 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes.

Who can file for a name change:

Any person who is a resident of the State of Illinois and has resided in the State a minimum of 6 months can file a petition with the court to change his/her name unless barred by conviction for certain crimes and misdemeanors as summarized on page 8 of this packet and set forth in the statute cited above.

What the court considers when deciding whether to grant a name change:

The presumption is that the request for name change will be granted if the petitioner satisfies the residency requirement and is not barred by record of convictions. So, unless there is a reason why it should not be granted, the court will grant a name change petition.



Step One: Identify the court where you will be filing documents and appearing to ask for your change of name.

In order to change your name you will need to file documents and appear in court to testify in support of your request. Unless special circumstances apply, you will be filing those documents and appearing in the Circuit Court for the county in which you reside. The courthouse for the county is usually located in the county seat. A list of Circuit Courts and the counties they each cover is included in the companion packet, *How to Request a Name Change in Illinois - Supplement*, available on our web site under "Court Proceedings." A map is also available on the Illinois Courts Website with links to court information for each county, at <http://www.state.il.us/court/CircuitCourt/CircuitMap/Map1.asp>.



Step Two: Prepare the necessary forms to start the name change process.

In the Supplement to this packet you will find 2 key forms that you will need to prepare and ultimately file with the Circuit Clerk at your county courthouse as described in Step Four: The Petition for Change of Name; the Notice of Filing for Change of Name. These forms are required in every name change case. Using the guide in the Supplement you will need to complete these forms.



The Petition is your formal written request asking the court to change your name to the new one that you specify. It also includes background information that you need to provide to the court to show you satisfy the residency and other statutory requirements referenced on page 8 of this packet. The Petition is a very important form that needs to be filled out carefully and submitted to the court if you want to change your name. If you do not request something in your Petition, the court cannot grant it to you.

The Notice of Filing for Change of Name is your notice to the public - required by law - that you are requesting a name change, the new name you are requesting, and the date of the hearing when the court will consider your request (the Circuit Court will tell you the hearing date when you file your Petition and you will fill it in on this form at that time, as described at Step Four). In addition to filing this with the court you will need to publish it in the newspaper as described below in Step Five.



Step Three: Ask the court to waive the filing and publication fees if you cannot afford those expenses ... and wait for a response (optional).

Ordinarily, the court charges a filing fee (the amount varies between counties) to take the documents a person submits to begin a case, assign a case number, and open a new case file for that new legal action. In addition to the filing fee, newspapers also charge a fee for publishing the public notice that a person is required to give in this type of case.

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You can ask the court to waive the filing fee by submitting an *Application to Sue as a Poor Person* to the court that will be considering your name change request. A form for making that application is included in the Supplement.



If you are filing for a name change in Jackson County use the *Application and Affidavit to Waive Filing Fees* instead

Typically, only persons of low income will receive the filing fee waiver, but the court does have discretion to grant the waiver where it would otherwise result in a substantial hardship to the applicant or his or her family. The income and other criteria for the waiver are set forth in Section 5-105 and Section 5-105.5 of Act 5 of Chapter 735 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes (735 ILCS 5/5-105 and 735 ILCS 5/5-105.5), available without charge online at <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs.asp>.

The court will issue a written order signed by a judge that either grants or denies your request to Sue or Defend as a Poor Person (or Order Waiving Filing Fees, if in Jackson County). You should receive a copy of the Order at the address you provided to the court.

If the court agrees to waive the filing fee you can also ask the court to waive the publication costs. A *Motion to Waive Publication Costs* is included in the Supplement packet. Here too, the court will issue a signed order with its decision.



Step Four: File the Petition and Notice along with the Order to Sue or Defend as a Poor Person/Order Waiving Filing Fees if you have one.

Make two extra copies of the Petition and Notice after you have filled them out (leaving the hearing date blank in the Notice), and take them together with the Order to Sue or Defend as a Poor Person or Order Waiving Filing Fees if you have one, and take them to the courthouse you identified at Step One for filing. Tell the Circuit Clerk that you are filing a Petition for Change of Name and need a hearing date. You should ask for one that is at least 8 weeks away to allow enough time to publish the Notice, as explained below in Step Five. List that hearing date and the court location on the Notice before you file it and on the copies that you have brought with you, and ask the Clerk to file-stamp each of the extra copies that you brought with you. Make sure to give the Clerk the Order to Sue or Defend as a Poor Person or Order Waiving Filing Fees if you have one or you will have to pay the filing fee.



Step Five: Publish the required public notice that you are asking for a name change.

You are required by law to give the public notice that you are asking the court to change your name by having the newspaper in the community where you reside publish a copy of the Notice of Filing for Change of Name that you filed with the court, listing the name you are requesting and the date and location of the hearing when the court will consider your request. By law, this notice has to be published once a week for three consecutive weeks, so the newspaper must be one that is at least published weekly. If there are no such newspapers in the community where you reside you can publish the notice in any newspaper that fits that requirement that is published in the county where you

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reside. If there are no newspapers in the county that meet that requirement then you can publish it any newspaper published in the State of Illinois that does.

Once you select a newspaper to publish your Notice, mail a letter addressed to the newspaper asking them to publish notice of your pending name change (a form letter that you can fill out is included in the Supplement), and include each of the following documents with that letter:

- a file stamped copy of the Notice of Filing of Petition for Name Change that you filed with the court listing the hearing date;
- a copy of the signed court order waiving publication costs if the court granted that request;
- if you did not ask for a waiver or the court turned you down, call the newspaper and ask how much it is going to cost to run your Notice once a week for three consecutive weeks, and then include a check or money order in that amount unless you are absolutely certain they are willing to bill you and publish your Notice without waiting for that payment;
- a stamped, self addressed envelope for them to use to mail you a copy of the Notice as it appears in the newspaper.



It may take a couple of weeks for the newspaper to receive and act on your request. By law, the hearing on your Petition cannot be held unless at least 6 weeks have passed since the first appearance of your Notice in the newspaper, so it is very important when you ask the Clerk of Court for the hearing date that you allow at least 8 weeks from the date that you plan on mailing your request to the newspaper. Understand that if you are delayed in mailing the request or the newspaper delays in acting on it and you fail to meet these timing requirements that the court may require that you set a new hearing date and repeat the notice process.



Step Six: File the Certificate of Publication or make sure that the newspaper has done so.

After your Notice has run in the newspaper for three consecutive weeks the newspaper should send you a Certificate of Publication with a copy of the Notice attached as it appeared in the newspaper. The Certificate is important because it shows that you gave the Notice required by law to change your name and a copy of the Certificate must be filed with the court by your hearing date. The Certificate is not one of the forms included in the Supplement. It has to come from the newspaper.

- If the court waived the publication fee the newspaper may send the Certificate of Publication to the Circuit Clerk directly to be filed in your case. Make sure the Certificate has been received by going to the courthouse after the Notice has had its three week run in the newspaper and asking the Circuit Clerk to let you see your case file. If the Certificate is not there, make sure to get it from the newspaper and file it with the Circuit Clerk yourself.
- If you did pay the publication fee you will need to get the Certificate of Publication from the newspaper and file it with the Circuit Clerk yourself.
- Make sure you have a file-stamped copy for yourself to bring with you to the hearing as part of your set of documents.



Step Seven: Prepare for the hearing.

Prepare the *Order for Change of Name*, included in the Supplement. The Order is the document the judge signs which awards you your new name if the judge grants your request.

Gather the documents together that you will need at the hearing if you have not done so already. This consists of the following:

- File stamped copies of all of the documents that should have been filed in your case: (1) the Petition for Change of Name; (2) Notice of Filing for Change of Name, and; (3) Certificate of Publication.
- The Order for Change of Name.
- Any other papers related to the Petition (such as papers documenting that you were pardoned or that at least ten years have passed since completion and discharge of your sentence if previously convicted of a felony that is not one that otherwise bars you from requesting a name change).

Review your Petition and be prepared to testify at the hearing about all of the facts you have alleged there (the numbered parts of the Petition) and what you want the court to do (the letter parts of the Petition). If you ask the court to do something that was not in your Petition, you may have to either amend your Petition or you may not get it.

Check the docket at the courthouse or ask the Clerk exactly what room your hearing will be in.



Step Eight: Attend the hearing:

Bring your copies of all the documents you filed with the Circuit Clerk, the Certification of Publication (even if you think or know the newspaper filed it with the Circuit Clerk), any other papers that relate to your Petition, and the Order for Name Change for the judge's signature if she or he grants your Petition.

Arrive at least 30 minutes before your hearing. Whatever you do, **don't be late!** Confirm your room assignment on arrival at the courthouse and go to that courtroom. Check in quietly with the Judge's Secretary or Clerk (the person sitting next to the Judge or where the Judge' seat is located).

Wait for your name and case number to be called. Be ready for the possibility that you may be tied up at the courthouse for the entire session that the scheduled hearing is part of. Your case may not be the first one called to come forward but you still have to be present and ready in case it is and continue to be available until called.

When your case is called, approach the bench. Always refer to the Judge as "your honor".

Before you begin, the judge may ask you preliminary questions about your case.

To testify, you will need to call yourself as a witness. At this time, the Judge will put you under oath and you will present your testimony. When you testify, your testimony should include:

- your present full name, first, middle and last name;
- your present address including city and state;
- the State or county where you were born;
- how long you have lived in Illinois; and
- the full name, first, middle, and last name that you would like the court to give you.

If the Judge grants your Petition, present your Order for Change of Name for his or her signature.

If the Judge wants corrections made, don't panic, you can ask for permission to submit a corrected version by mail.



Step Nine: File your Order and get certified copies

After the Judge has signed the Order for Change of Name, you will need to file it with the Circuit Clerk. While there you should also get 3 certified copies of the Order so will have them to provide to other agencies as needed to change your name on their records. Please note that there may be a charge for these copies.



Step Ten: Notify the Secretary of State of your name change and get new identification and motor vehicle related documents as required.

You are required by law to notify the Secretary of State within 10 days after changing your name in Illinois, and you must obtain a corrected driver's license, corrected title, and corrected registration ID card before the Secretary of State records can be changed. This cannot be accomplished online. You will need to go to your nearest Driver Services facility (for a list of facilities and related information go to <http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/drivers/facilities/home.html>) and come prepared with proper documentation. Fees will be required for all corrected documents.

In addition, residents who hold a valid Commercial Drivers License (CDL) must obtain a corrected driver's license within 30 days of any change of name.

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Step Eleven: Change your name on your birth certificate, Social Security Card, U.S. Passport, and give notice to other agencies, etc..

- **Birth Certificate.** If you were born in the State of Illinois, you will need the following items to change (i.e. "correct") the name on your birth certificate:
 - (1) a certified copy of the Order for Change of Name;
 - (2) an Application for Correction of Birth Certificate, available online at <http://www.idph.state.il.us/vitalrecords/pdf/bccorrect.pdf> (yes, it is the same application used to change the birth certificate for a child - here you are both the person making the request and the "child" at issue);
 - (3) a money order for the fee, payable to Vital Records, Springfield (as of this writing, the fee is \$15.00; check the amount online at <http://www.idph.state.il.us/vitalrecords/correctioninfo.htm> or call the Division at Bureau of Vital Records, Illinois Department of Health, at 217-782-6553).

Mail these three items to the address below:

Illinois Department of Public Health
Division of Vital Records
925 East Ridgely Ave.
Springfield, IL 62702-5097

If you were born in a state other than Illinois, you should mail a certified copy of your Order to whatever agency handles the birth records for the State. There may be other requirements and will probably be a charge for this service, so check before you send your Order.

- **Social Security Card.** Take a certified copy of the Order for Name Change to any Social Security Office (find locations by zip code at <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp>), fill out an application, and submit it to Social Security staff. Be sure to bring a piece of identification with your picture, such as your driver's license or Passport. There is no charge for this change.
- **U.S. Passport.** If you have a valid passport with your old name issued 1 year ago or less, use Form DS-5504 available from the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, online at http://travel.state.gov/passport/forms/ds5504/ds5504_2663.html. If it was issued more than 1 but less than 15 years ago and you were at least 16 years of age when it was issued, use Form DS-82 available online at http://travel.state.gov/passport/forms/ds82/ds82_843.html. In both cases, see http://travel.state.gov/passport/correcting/ChangeName/ChangeName_851.html.
- **Voter Registration.** If you have already registered to vote in Illinois before changing your name you will need to re-register. An application to do so is available online at <http://www.elections.il.gov/Downloads/VotingInformation/PDF/R-19.pdf>.
- **Other.** Your existing mortgage, insurance, and bank account agreements may require that you give the company notice of any name change, so check, and consider providing notice even if not required

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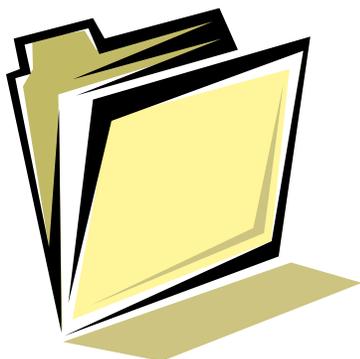
Q: What Happens if The Court Denies Your Petition?

If your request for a name change was denied because of some procedural error on your part (for example, if you did not do the publication correctly), then you should correct the error and request another hearing (note that you may need to publish a new Notice).

If your request was denied because you did not satisfy substantive requirements (for example, because you had not resided in the State of Illinois for at least six months, or you had a felony conviction for a crime that does not bar a person from petitioning for a name change but it was less than ten years since completion and discharge of your sentence), then you should ask the court to deny the petition "without prejudice" so you can start the process over again once you can satisfy the requirements.



Finally, whenever you lose in court, you have the right to request the court to reconsider its decision and you have the right to appeal the decision to a higher court. Please note that in most cases you have 30 days or less from the date of the judge's decision to exercise these rights or you may lose your right to reconsideration or appeal. You should seek the assistance of an attorney to exercise these rights.



Q: What is a court file?

A: The file is the way that the courthouse keeps track of a lawsuit.

The file includes all of the documents that were filed, notices of hearings, notes by the judge and clerk, and letters to and from the judge and clerk.

Q: When do you need to file a document in a court file?

A: Generally, you will file a document when you want to have evidence that a task was completed, record an event or a statement, or give notice to someone about something.

Q: What does it mean to file a document in a court file?

A: Generally, filing a document means giving the Circuit Clerk a copy of a document so that he/she can place it in the court file you want it to go in. When the Clerk files the document, he/she will stamp it with a stamp that says the date (and sometimes the time) the document was filed.

Q: Does filing a document make it legal?

A: No. The Clerk will not check to make sure that your document is in compliance with the law. Most of the time you can file anything you want as long as you are willing to pay for the filing costs. It does not mean, however, that what you have filed is correct.

Q: Why is filing so important?

A: Most of the time, filing is the primary way to show that you have met the deadline for something — either to initiate a lawsuit or to notify someone of a lawsuit or a hearing. Filing is also the way that you notify the court of your answer (response) to lawsuit started against you.

Please note that failure to file something on time can cause you to lose your right to proceed with your claim or you may be forced to start over.





4 Commonly held beliefs about changing your name which are not true:

I can change my name to whatever I want.

While most name change petitions are granted, the law gives the court the power to decline a person's request for a name change. Consequently, the court can refuse your request to change your name to a new name if there is a reason to decline your request.

I can change my wife's and my children's names at the same time that I change my name.

The law allows you to include your spouse and your minor children in a petition to change your name. This packet, however, is only for persons who desire to change their name only .

I don't have to have a reason to change my name.

While the law does not specifically require a reason for you to change your name, the law gives the court the power to decline a person's request for a name change if there is a reason to decline the request. In these cases, you may need a reason to change your name.

I can change my children's names when I divorce.

You can only take a maiden or former name back when you divorce. You cannot change your children's names through a divorce action. You can only change your children's names through a separate lawsuit. This packet does not discuss how to change your children's names.



Give yourself some breathing room when you set the hearing date with the Circuit Clerk for your Petition

When you ask for a hearing date from the Circuit Clerk there is a temptation to accept the soonest possible date they offer to give you. Keep in mind, however, that you have to arrange for the Notice of Filing for Name Change listing that hearing date to be published in the newspaper and there must be at least 6 consecutive weeks

between the date your Notice actually appears in the paper for the first time and the hearing date listed in the Notice. Due to printing schedules and costs, a newspaper can't always run a Notice the same week that they receive it, not every piece of mail a newspaper receives is opened immediately, and you need to build in time for mailing your request to the newspaper and transit time. The best advice is therefore to give yourself a little extra time by selecting a hearing date with the Circuit Clerk that is at least 8 weeks from the date you will actually submit your request.

Go to other name change hearings before yours

If your county courthouse has a special date when they schedule the name change hearings, try to attend at least one hearing before the date of your hearing. This way, you can watch what happens, (including what mistakes others make) take notes, and be more prepared for your hearing date.

Get help if you need it

If you have trouble following directions, doing things on time, filling out forms, or keeping track of paperwork, changing your name may be much more stressful than it needs to be. If, however, you have a friend you can help you do these things, the job will be a lot easier. Keep in mind, however, that a friend cannot take the place of the advice and experience of an attorney licensed to practice in the State of Illinois. Consequently, if you need legal advice or if obtaining your own name change proves to be too difficult a task for you, talk to an attorney.