

Easy Steps to Change a Name

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People interested in changing their name or their child's name should be aware of some important facts about the process.

First, adults can only change their name one time, except if they are doing it pursuant to a marriage or a divorce (name changes following marriage or divorce are not covered in this article). Second, children's names can be easily changed during a step-parent adoption, so there is no need to change the child's name through a separate process. If the child's name is changed before the step-parent adoption to the adopting parent's name, sometimes this can raise alarm with a court granting a step-parent adoption, unless there was a good reason for it. Also, for both children and adult name changes, a person needs to have resided in the county in which they will request the name change for at least 6 months, unless the child is a newborn.

Persons over the age of 16 will follow the adult name change process. They will need to initiate both local and national criminal records checks. These can take approximately 3 weeks to complete, and cost \$14 for the local check and \$18 for the national check, as well as \$12 for fingerprints.

Once the records checks are completed, a Legal Assistance Attorney can help draft all the relevant court documents. For adults, two of these documents will be affidavits of good character which must be signed by two people who live in the same county as the person asking for the name change and who have known the applicant for six months. All of these documents should be notarized and filed at the county courthouse. The filing fee in Cumberland County is \$120, and this amount must be paid in cash. Notice of the name change, and the reason for it, will be posted in the courthouse for 10 days, and after that period the change may be granted by the court.

The process for children is similar, except criminal records checks and affidavits of good character are not required. Also, both parents must consent to the name change, so a Legal Assistance Attorney will provide a document wherein the non-requesting parent can provide consent. If the other parent's whereabouts are not known, or if the natural father's identity is not known, the requesting parent can attest to this in an affidavit.

You can also contact the XVIII Airborne Corps Legal Assistance Office at 910-396-0396 or 6113. The office is located on the first floor of the soldier support center in Wing D and is open Monday, Tuesday, and Friday from 0900-1630, on Wednesday from 1300-1630, and on Thursday from 0730-1630. For more information please visit our website at <http://www.bragg.army.mil/directorates/osja/Pages/LegalAssistance.aspx>