

New Law Affects Maine Adoptees

Maine has restored a basic human right to all Maine-born adult adoptees – the right to know their identity at birth! Just as New Hampshire, Alabama and Oregon legislatures have done in the past 12 years, the 123rd Maine Legislature made the decision in June 2007, via LD 1084, to correct an injustice the Maine Legislature enacted in 1953 when they declared that the original birth and adoption records of adoptees were to be sealed upon adoption of any child after August 8th of that year and leaving adoptees access to their original identity only at the discretion of the courts and only if adoptees knew this fact, which is buried in the cumbersome adoption laws.

Excitement is building as over 130 Maine-born adoptees from around Maine, plus New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Florida, California and other states have already submitted their info to the Maine Office of Vital Statistics. Many, including those living out-of-state, are coming to Augusta to request their Original birth Certificate on January 2, 2009.

Maine LD 1084/Public Law 409 – An Act to Allow Adult Adoptees Access to their Original Birth Certificates (OBC) - goes into effect January 1, 2009. Any Maine-born adult adoptee wishing to receive an uncertified copy of their original birth certificate in-person on January 2, 2009 at the Office of Vital Statistics in Augusta, must contact Lorraine Wilson immediately at the following address, email, or phone and provide her with the information (below) she will need to locate their records:

Lorraine Wilson
Deputy Registrar
Office of Data, Research and Vital Statistics
Division of Public Health Systems
Center for Disease Control and Prevention
Maine Department of Health and Human Services 244 Water Street 11 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0011
(207) 287-3181
1-888-664-9491 (toll free)
Lorraine.Wilson@maine.gov

The adoptee information needed:

- Name after adoption, Date of birth, Town of birth (if known)
- The relationship of the requestor to the adoptee (i.e., same person, son, daughter, etc.)
- Contact information of the requestor

In order to receive a copy of his/her original birth certificate on January 2, 2009, an adoptee will still need to download the **official state application form** from this website:

<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/bohodr/documents/Application%20for%20Adult%20Adoptee.pdf>.

The adoptee must also bring (or mail if not coming in-person) the filled out and notarized form, a certified copy of their current birth certificate, and a \$10 check made out to: Treasurer - State of

Maine.

Parents of origin (also called birth parents) may also NOW submit information, confidentially, to Lorraine Wilson:

- Contact Preference Form, which is downloadable from this website:
<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/bohodr/documents/Contact%20Preference%20form.pdf>.
- Birth Parent Updated Medical History Form, which is downloadable from this website:
<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/bohodr/documents/Medical%20History.pdf>.

Everyone impacted by this law should read the rules compiled by the Office of Data, Research and Vital Statistics (Maine Center for Disease Control, DHHS), downloadable at this website:
http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/ rules_documents/Adult%20Adoptees%20Access%20to%20Original%20Birth%20Certificate.pdf.

REASONS FOR SUBMITTING THIS INFO EARLY: If an adoptee applies for the first time on January 2, 2009, it is very likely they will not get the uncertified copy of their original birth certificate that day. If birth parents have filled out their forms, adoptees will have updated medical info and possibly a current contact name and address that will expedite searching if that is what an adoptee chooses to do.

ISSUES TO BE AWARE OF:

- Adoptees who obtain their OBC before a birth parent has submitted their forms will be able to request that DHHS send them the birth parent contact preference and medical history forms.
- In about 80-90% of the cases, the birth fathers name will not be on the birth certificate (DNA testing has not been available until relatively recently and birth fathers were not always required to be part of the surrendering process as they are now), unless the couple was married.
- Medical, genealogical and cultural histories are important to many individuals, yet for others, just having the document ("the deed to my person," as adoptee Robert Hafetz says) will be sufficient at this time.
- To help people impacted by this law to work through the emotional roller coaster that this information may stimulate, OBC for ME has two adoption triad support group formats: **ONLINE** at this website - <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/obcformesupport/> which requires a prior free Yahoo registration, and **IN-PERSON** with the next meeting on January 17, 2009, at Norway Savings Bank Community Room, Route 1 South, Falmouth, ME, 10 AM - Noon. There are also support groups in just about every state, province and country on this continent as well as in most overseas countries.

A private reception for adoptees and their families will be held at the Augusta EconoLodge at 5 PM on January 2, 2009. For more information contact Bobbi Beavers, rbbeavers@comcast.net.