

NAME CHANGES FOR MINORS IN Washington



What are the legal requirements?

The process for changing a minor's name in Washington State varies from one county to another. Generally, a parent must file a Petition for Name Change on the child's behalf. The petition usually should be filed in the district court for the county where the minor lives. The petition is then sent to the judge for approval. You may need to schedule a court hearing, where you can explain to the judge why the name change is in the best interest of the child and reaffirm that you are not seeking the name change to commit fraud.

You will need to pay a filing fee when you apply for a name change. You can find the filing fee for your county on the district court's website. If only one parent is filing, that parent may need to cover costs of serving the other parent with notice of the legal name change.

Where do I find instructions and forms for my county?

To find specific information for your county, find your county at https://www.courts.wa.gov/court_dir?fa=court_dir.county. After you select your county, scroll down to the section called "District Court." Click on "Visit Website," and search for "minor name change" on the court's website. You'll then find the forms you need and instructions for the name change application. You can also contact the district court directly to ask for information.

You can find forms and instructions for the largest counties in the state below.

King County (includes Seattle)

- Instructions: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/courts/district-court/name-changes.aspx>
- Petition: https://www.kingcounty.gov/~/_media/courts/DistrictCourt/pdfs/petncmin.ashx?la=en

Pierce County (includes Tacoma)

- Instructions: https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/1970/Name_Change_Packet?bid=d=
- Petition: <https://linxonline.co.pierce.wa.us/linxweb/Kiosk/main.cfm>

Snohomish County

- Instructions: <https://snohomishcountywa.gov/581/Legal-Change-of-Name>

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- Petition: <https://snohomishcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4683/Petition-For-Name-Change-Minor?bidId=>

Spokane County

In Spokane County, name changes for minors must be filed with the Superior Court's family court division, not the District Court (name changes for adults can be filed with the District Court).

- Instructions: <https://www.spokanecounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/3651/Name-Change---Instructions-for-Changing-Name-of-Minor-Child-PDF>
- Petition: <https://www.spokanecounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/3635/Name-Change---Petition-for-Changing-Name-of-Minor-Child-PDF>
- Additional forms you may need during the name change process can be found at <https://www.spokanecounty.org/1409/Family-Court-Forms>

Does the process require parental consent?

Yes, at least one parent must file the petition on behalf of the minor. If only one parent is filing, that parent may be required to notify the non-filing parent before the hearing. For more information about the requirements in this situation, contact your county's district court or consult the instructions on the district court's website.

Does the process require publication?

In some counties, you will be required to publish a notice of the name change in a local newspaper before the hearing, but in some cases judges might waive that requirement to protect the minor's privacy and safety. Additionally, a hearing will generally be held in open court (meaning that the hearing is open to the public) and records of the name change application will be publicly available, but you may file a petition to request that these records be sealed. You might have to file this petition with the superior court rather than the district court. Consult your district court to find out the requirements for publication and sealing in your county.

What will the judge consider?

Judges have a lot of discretion in granting name changes. Some may have lots of questions and want to see lots of evidence regarding the name change of the child, others may grant a name change as long as there are no objections. The judge will generally consider the best interests of the minor child. They typically evaluate the best interest of the child by looking at a variety of factors, which may include the child's preference (taking into consideration their age and experience), the length of time a child has used that name, the difficulties,

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harassment, or embarrassment a child may experience from the present or proposed name, and the motives or interests of the parent.

To demonstrate that the name change is in the best interests of the child, along with the name change petition you may want to submit evidence showing the judge why this is in the child's best interest. Examples of such evidence would be letters from teachers, family, or friends confirming their use of preferred name, letters from providers confirming the child's gender identity, etc.

If only one parent is filing, the judge may also consider whether the other parent agrees and the relationship the other parent has with the child.