

# Adoption Search in Washington State

*Finding Connections to the Past*



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

## ***Adoption is a lifelong journey.***

*It affects the adoptee, adoptive parent and the birth parent.*

*Each person is affected by loss: for the birth parent, the loss of watching their child grow; for the adoptive parent, the loss of early years; and for the adoptee, the loss of the unknown.*



## **What are the steps in the search process?**

Every search is unique but most have similar steps in the process, including:

1. Emotional preparation for the search.
2. Collecting known information.
3. Learning about state laws and processes.
4. Listing your name with an adoption reunion registry.
5. Locating missing documents.
6. Filing requests with the court.



## Where do I go to begin my search?

Places that may contain information about adoption are:

- Courts (where the adoption was finalized)
  - court records contain legal documents and may contain medical/family background information
- Department of Health – Center for Health Statistics – has the original birth certificate, the amended birth certificate and the adoption decree
- Adoption agencies (check with the agency that finalized your adoption for available information)
  - agency records vary
- Hospitals – may contain birth information and other medical data

## What can I receive from an agency adoption record?

The adult adoptee, birth parent or the adoptive parent can receive non-identifying information without a court order. The information contained in the agency record will vary and will only have information to the point of the adoption finalization.

The law allows for the release of the name and location of the county court where a relinquishment or termination of parental rights or an adoption took place, by the agency that finalized the adoption.



## What information do I need to begin my search?

It is helpful if you know who finalized the adoption. This will make the process easier for you.

What is helpful for an agency to locate records:

- Birth name (if known)
- Date of birth
- Adoptive name
- Adoptive parents name
- Date adopted
- Agency/attorney completing the adoption
- County where the adoption occurred in (if known)

## What laws apply in Washington State?

In Washington, the adoption records are confidential RCW 26.33.330 and 26.33.340.

Agencies and the court cannot release identifying information without a court order.

Laws that apply to searching are:

- Confidential Intermediaries (RCW 26.33.343)
- Non-certified copies of original birth certificate (RCW 26.33.345)
- Consent or refusal to release adoptee's identifying information (RCW 26.33.347)

## How do I get identifying information?

Washington State does not have a central registry for adoptees. To gain access to identifying information, a court order must be obtained. In Washington, an adopted person over the age of 21 or under the age of 21 with parental permission, may ask the court to appoint a Confidential Intermediary to initiate a search. The Confidential Intermediary may discreetly conduct a search for the birth family.

There are fees associated with a search completed by a Confidential Intermediary.

## What information can I get from the Department of Children, Youth & Families?

For adoptions completed through the Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) and for families who adopted a child in state foster care, adoption records are stored electronically or the paper files may be archived at DCYF headquarters office in Olympia.

### Non-Identifying Information

To obtain non-identifying (i.e., first names only, no year of birth, no addresses, phone number, etc.) information for children who have been adopted through DCYF, submit a written request to:

The Department of Children, Youth & Families  
Public Records Officer

P.O. Box 40992

Olympia, WA 98504-0992

Intake Phone: 360-407-5520

Fax: 360-407-5571

Email: [dcyf.publicdisclosure@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:dcyf.publicdisclosure@dcyf.wa.gov)

[www.dcyf.wa.gov/public-records](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/public-records)

Please include:

- Date of birth and adoptive name
- Name of adoptive parents
- Return mailing address

For private adoptions, contact the agency or attorney that finalized the adoption.

## What other resources are available?

In Washington State, the Washington Adoption Rights Movement (WARM) is very active in search issues. WARM is a non-profit organization formed in 1976, serving the needs of adult adoptees and their birth families. WARM services include:

- Court searches for anyone born or adopted in the State of Washington
- Non-court searches for those who have documented identifying information (all states)
- A FREE birth registry for anyone born or adopted in the state of Washington.
- Support Groups
- Referrals to sources in other states
- Books about adult adoption issues.

### **Washington Adoption Reunion Movement**

5950 Sixth Ave S, Suite 213

Seattle, WA 98108

Phone: (206) 767-9510, 24-hour voice mail system

Fax: (206) 763-4803

[www.warmsearch.org](http://www.warmsearch.org)

### **American Adoption Congress**

1030 15th St NW Suite B-103

Washington, DC 20036

Phone: (202) 483-3399

[www.americanadoptioncongress.org](http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org)

### **International Soundex Reunion Registry (ISRR)**

PO Box 371179

Las Vegas, NV 89137

888-886-ISRR (4777)

[www.isrr.org](http://www.isrr.org)

*If you would like copies of this document in an alternative format or language, please contact DCYF Constituent Relations (1-800-723-4831 | 360-902-8060, [ConstRelations@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:ConstRelations@dcyf.wa.gov)).*