

Adoption Records Search Program



Wisconsin's Adoption Records Search Program works with adoptees, adults whose birth parents' rights were terminated, and birth parents to gain access to vital pieces of adoptees' social and medical histories. The Adoption Records Search Program law is outlined in Wis. Stat. §§ [48.432](#) – [48.433](#).

Who can submit an Adoption Search Application?

The Wisconsin Adoption Records Search Program can **only** provide information when termination of parental rights and/or adoption finalization occurred **in Wisconsin**.

Applicants requesting information from the Search Program **must be 18 years old or older**. The applicant can be:

- An adult adoptee who was adopted in Wisconsin
- A person whose birth parents' rights were terminated in Wisconsin
- An adoptive parent of a person adopted in Wisconsin
- A guardian or legal custodian of a person adopted in Wisconsin or whose birth parents' rights were terminated in Wisconsin
- An offspring (adult child) of a person adopted in Wisconsin
- The parent, guardian, or legal custodian of the offspring of a deceased individual or adoptee, if the offspring is under 18 years of age
- An agency or social worker assigned to provide services to a person adopted in Wisconsin or whose birth parent'(s) rights were terminated

What information may be shared?

All the above applicants may receive **non-identifying information**. This means that names, dates, contact information, and other information that can be used to identify the birth parents will be redacted (hidden) from the documentation.

These documents could include:

- Case notes and documentation
- Medical, dental, and psychiatric information
- Birth records and delivery information
- Educational materials
- Medical/genetic history of the adoptee and birth relatives
- Legal information and court documents
- Letters or handwritten notes

The following applicants **may** be able to receive **identifying information**:

- Adult adoptees who were adopted in Wisconsin
- Persons whose birth parents' rights were terminated in Wisconsin
- Offspring of adult adoptees or persons whose birth parents' rights were terminated in Wisconsin, *if the adoptee/person is deceased*

Identifying information is **only available if all known birth parents have provided a notarized affidavit consenting to the release of information or are deceased**. Identifying information could include the unredacted versions of the above documents, current contact information for living birth parents, and/or the original, impounded birth certificate.

Completing an Adoption Search Application

A \$40.00 nonrefundable fee is required when submitting an application. The fee may be waived or reduced if it poses financial hardship for the applicant; please contact the Adoption Records Search Program at (608) 422-6928 or DCFAdoptionSearch@wisconsin.gov to request a fee waiver or reduction.

Eligible individuals outlined above can submit an Adoption Search Application to request information about an adoptee's social or medical history. There are several options for completing an application:

- Complete an electronic application and electronic payment at dcf.wisconsin.gov/adoption/search/application.
- Download and print the application, available at dcf.wisconsin.gov/adoption/search.
- Request a paper copy in the mail by contacting the Adoption Records Search Program at DCFAdoptionSearch@wisconsin.gov or (608) 422-6928.

Birth Parents

Adoption Records Search Program search specialists may contact birth parents whose children are the subject of a search request. It is up to each birth parent to decide whether they would like to have their identifying information released; the search specialists can help talk through this.

Current Wisconsin law does not permit birth parents to initiate a search request through the Adoption Records Search Program. However, birth parents can:

- Request that the Adoption Records Search Program locates their birth child(ren) to provide urgent medical or genetic information. A written statement from a licensed medical provider will be required with this request.
- File a notarized [affidavit consenting to the release of their information](#). This can be provided to the Adoption Records Search Program at any time so that it is already on file when and if a birth child requests information.
- Revoke an affidavit that was previously filed.

To do any of the above, contact the Adoption Records Search Program by emailing DCFAdoptionSearch@wisconsin.gov or calling (608) 422-6928.

Siblings, Spouses, and other Relatives of Adoptees

Current Wisconsin law only permits those listed on the reverse page to apply for the Search Program. Siblings, spouses, cousins, and other relatives are not able to use this program.

Outreach Statements

Adoptees and adults whose birth parents' rights were terminated are asked to provide an outreach statement as part of their application for the program.

There's no "best" way to write an outreach statement; they vary greatly and should be personal, thoughtful, and unique to the applicant. Outreach statements can be handwritten or typed. Some things that may be included in an outreach statement include:

- Your reason for submitting a Search request at this time
- An overview of what your life has been like since adoption or what it is like now
- General information about yourself (like your education, occupation, marital or partner status, specific interests or hobbies, and whether you have children)
- Your thoughts on your adoption or your life as an adoptee
- What you want out of your Search request (e.g., just information; to meet your birth parents; to form an ongoing relationship with birth relatives)
- Outreach statements cannot include identifying information (like names and contact information) or photos.

Contact the Adoption Records Search Program

Contact the Adoption Records Search Program for more information about the program or for additional support. This could include:

- Requesting a paper copy of the application, affidavit, or other forms via mail
- Confirming that you meet the eligibility criteria prior to submitting an application
- Talking through the decision to Search—what questions or concerns do you have about the Search process?

You can get in touch with the Adoption Records Search Program by emailing DCFAdoptionSearch@wisconsin.gov, calling (608) 422-6928, or sending a letter to:

Adoption Records Search Program
PO Box 8916
Madison, WI 53708-8916

The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call the Division of Safety and Permanence at (608) 266-8787. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.