

Beginning the process

An application for disclosure is used to request non-identifying information and initiate a search to receive identifying information. There are three ways that you can obtain an application from VDSS:

VDSS website at www.dss.virginia.gov. Go to Foster Care & Adoption/Adoption/Forms.

Request in writing to VDSS, 801 East Main Street, 11th Floor, Richmond, Virginia 23219

Call the Adoption Disclosure Specialists at 804-726-7526 or 804-726-7749.

Sending Letters

A birth family member can send a letter to VDSS using the Relative Update to an Adoption Record form that can be found at the VDSS website, www.dss.virginia.gov. Go to Foster Care & Adoption/Adoption/Forms.

Resources

If you are considering whether or not to initiate a search and need more information or insight, there is reading literature available on the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC), established by Congress that provides free information on all aspects of adoption. The search and reunion information is provided through the Child Welfare Information Gateway <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/search/>.



**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES**

Accessing information from an adoption record

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) maintains a permanent record of all adoptions finalized in Virginia on or after July 1, 1942. An adult adoptee, adoptive parent, birth parent, and adult birth sibling have the right to **identifying** and **non-identifying information** from the adoption record under the conditions described.

*Pursuant to the Code of Virginia
§§ 63.2-1246 and 63.2-1247*

Overview

Identifying information is information that can lead to the discovery of a person's identity, which may include names and contact information. In order to receive identifying information, a search for the adoptee or birth family must first be initiated to gain consent to release identifying information.

Non-identifying information includes narrative information about the placement, birth parents, and applicable legal documents but does not include names or trace information.

ADULT ADOPTEE (EIGHTEEN AND OLDER)

Adult adoptees can receive **non-identifying information** about themselves and their birth family from the adoption record and apply to receive **identifying information** on their birth family.

ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Adoptive parents can receive **non-identifying information** from the adoption record. For adoptions finalized on or after **July 1, 1994**, the adoptive parent of a minor child may apply to receive **identifying information** on the birth family.

BIRTH PARENTS

For adoptions finalized on or after **July 1, 1994**, when the adoptee is **21 years of age or older**, the birth parent(s) may apply to receive **identifying information** on the adoptee. Birth parents can send letters to VDSS to be included in the adoption record.

ADULT BIRTH SIBLINGS

For adoptions finalized on or after **July 1, 1994**, when the adoptee is **21 years of age or older**, the adult birth sibling may apply to VDSS for **identifying information** on the adoptee. Birth siblings can send letters to VDSS to be included in the adoption record.

OTHER BIRTH FAMILY MEMBERS

Any member of the birth family can send letters to VDSS to be included in the adoption record. If the adoptee requests a search, a copy of the letter will be given to the adoptee at that time.

ADOPTEE FAMILY MEMBERS

Family members, such as spouse or descendants of the adoptee, **cannot** have access to the adoptee's record.

CRITICAL MEDICAL INFORMATION

The adoptee, adoptive parent, birth parent(s), or adult birth sibling can request that an attempt be made to convey critical medical, psychological and genetic information. A physician or licensed mental health provider must certify, in writing, a clear explanation as to the reasons that it is critical that the information be conveyed. *Confidentiality of all parties is maintained by the agency.*

