

British Columbia



British Columbia was the first province in Canada to open adoption records. Since 1996, both adopted adults and their birth parents have been able to access information about each other from the original and amended birth registrations.

I am a BC adoptee or birth parent. I want to find my birth parents/adult child. What should I do?

1. Apply for identifying information. Adoptees (aged 19+) will receive their original birth registration. This document was created at the time of your birth and names your birth mother and, in some cases, your birth father.

Birth mothers will receive a copy of the amended birth registration. When your child was adopted, his/her birth registration was amended to show the names of his/her adoptive parents and the adoptee's name after adoption. Once your child is 19 years old, you are entitled to a copy of this amended document. It will give you the name the adoptee received after his/her adoption. The names of the adoptive parents will be blacked out. You can also receive the original birth registration which shows that you gave birth to the child. Many birth mothers find having a copy of this document to be very healing.

To obtain the birth registration, call Vital Statistics at 1 800 663-8328 or 250 952-2681 or 604 660-2937.

2. Once you have received the original or amended birth registration you can apply for the birth records. At the time of the adoption, the social workers created files about the birth and adoptive families. Both adopted adults and birth parents can now apply for copies of these files. They will provide you with information about the birth and adoptive families.
3. Apply for the Adoption Order. This is the official document that marks the adoption.
4. Place your name on the passive registry operated by the Adoption Reunion Registry. There is a \$25.00 fee for placing your name on the registry. Once they have received your application, the social workers will check the registry to discover if a member of your birth family/adult child has also registered. If they find the name of a birth family member/adult child on the registry, they will notify you both that there is a match and ask

how you would like to proceed. If you both want to move forward, the social worker will help to facilitate your reunion.

If there is no match, your name will stay on the registry. If a member of your birth family/adult child registers in the future the social worker will call you and let you know.

If there is no match you may want to have the ARR search on your behalf for your birth parent/adult child. If you are an adoptee and your birth parents are deceased, you can request a search for a birth sibling. The first search will cost \$250. Each subsequent search will cost \$180. If your birth relative/adult child agrees to contact, the social worker will help facilitate your reunion. Please note that you must have received the birth registration before the ARR will search on your behalf.

I am a birth father. I want to meet my adult child. What can I do?

You can register with the registry operated by the ARR provided you are named in the adoption file, on the OBR, or if you signed the adoption consent form.

If your name is on the OBR or if you signed the consent form at the time of the adoption, you can request that the ARR do a search for your adult child. Unfortunately, you cannot request a search if you are named in the file but not on the OBR or the consent form.

I am a birth sibling. What can I do?

You can register with the registry. A social worker will contact you when there is a match. If the birth parent that you and the adoptee share is deceased you can request a search for the adoptee.

I am the child/grandchild of an adoptee. What can I do?

You can place your name on the registry. If the adoptee is deceased you can apply for a search for the adoptee's birth parents. If they are deceased, you can request a search for the adoptee's birth sibling.

I am a birth relative e.g. birth grandparent, birth aunt. What can I do?

You can place your name on the registry. If the adoptee registers, a social worker will contact you.

I am finding the reunion experience to be emotional. Who can I talk to?

The ARR has counsellors who are happy to talk with you. You may prefer to talk with a counsellor who is not affiliated with the government. The ARR can provide you with a list of therapists and counsellors whom you may choose to contact. The ARR also has adoption related articles that may help you understand the changes occurring in your life.

Is there any way that I can be blocked from receiving identifying information about my birth parent/adult child? Is there any way I can be blocked from contacting my birth parent/adult child?

If the adoption took place before November 1996, both adoptees and birth parents can file a disclosure veto. This document will block the government's ability to release any identifying information about the other party. The disclosure veto is in effect until two years after the death of the person who filled it out.

All adopted adults and birth parents have the option of filing a No-contact Declaration. This document allows the government to release identifying information about the other party but forbids you to contact them. Before the government will give you any information you must sign a document stating that you will not contact and will have no one else contact your birth relative. If you disregard the No-contact Declaration, you can be fined \$10 000 or receive 6 months in jail.

When submitting a veto, the applicant is given the opportunity to provide a written statement. In it s/he might provide medical information or explain why s/he feels s/he cannot give you information or meet you at this time.

It is important to recognize that very few people file vetoes. The majority of adoptees and birth parents welcome contact.

To Contact the Adoption Reunion Registry:

Ministry of Children and Family Development
Adoption Reunion Registry
PO Box 9705 Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9S1
Telephone: (250)387-3660
Fax: (250) 356-1864

For toll-free access within BC call (604)660-2421 (within Vancouver) or 1-800-883-7867 (elsewhere in BC) and ask to have your call transferred to (250) 387-3660.

Website: <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adoption/reunion/index.htm>