

Who can obtain a copy of a vital record?

In the State of Missouri, vital records are not open to the general public. Copies of vital records are provided to specifically defined individuals or entities. This helps protect identities, prevent fraud, and preserve the integrity of vital records. State law only allows a certified copy of a vital record to be issued to a person with a direct and tangible interest in the record.

Pursuant to [19 CSR 10-10](#), the registrant, a member of his/her family, his/her guardian, or one of their official representatives shall be considered to have a direct and tangible interest and may be issued a certified copy of a vital record such as a birth or death certificate. Applicants requesting records shall furnish adequate identifying information contained on the record to ensure the correct record is being released.

- **Immediate family members** are qualified to receive copies of **birth certificates**. Immediate family members shall include those family members and in-laws in the direct line of descent up to, but not including, cousins. This qualification of entitlement also applies to **Statements of Marriage, Divorce, and Single Status**.
 - **Applicant must identify at least one (1) parent on the record.*
- **All family members**, genealogists representing a family member, and professionally recognized genealogists are eligible to receive copies of **death certificates**. All family members includes **in-laws and cousins** and **great and step relationships** for the following: brother, sister, mother, father, son, daughter, grandmother, grandfather, aunt, or uncle. Family members outside of these relationships (ex: great, great) will need to produce additional documentation or information to demonstrate the applicant's link to the requested record. Alternatively, direct and tangible interest documents may be used to prove entitlement. Note: death records over fifty (50) years old may be searched for using the [Secretary of State's Missouri Digital Heritage](#) website.
 - **Applicant must identify at least one (1) parent on the record. Death records over fifty (50) years old are exempt from this requirement.*
- **Official representatives** shall include an **attorney, physician, funeral director**, or other authorized agent acting in behalf of the registrant or his/her family. Official representatives shall demonstrate a link between themselves and the registrant on the vital record or qualified family member. Funeral directors may act as an official representative to obtain copies of death records only.
 - *Example:* an attorney that has signed contractual documentation demonstrating they represent the immediate family member or a funeral home director presenting signed documentation listing services provided for the decedent.
- **An other authorized agent** shall produce a signed and notarized statement by the registrant or a member of his/her qualified family authorizing the release of a record.
 - *Example:* a mother may write a signed notarized statement authorizing a neighbor to request and receive a record for her child if the mother is unable to make the request for herself.
- Others may demonstrate a direct and tangible interest when information is needed for **determination or protection of personal or property rights**.
 - *Example:* Direct and tangible interest would be present if a car title needed to be changed over to a person buying the car and the owner is deceased. The buyer would be qualified to

receive a copy of the owner's death certificate by providing documentation of the car purchase.

- *Example:* An ex-wife (divorced from decedent) needs a death certificate of a former husband to obtain benefits from the time period they were married. The ex-wife is no longer a family member but would be qualified to receive a copy of the ex-husband's death certificate by providing documentation showing her eligibility to receive benefits.
- A **parent** or **legal guardian** on behalf of a **minor (under 18) applicant**.
- *Example:* a mother (not married to the father of her child, and, therefore not automatically entitled to the record by her relationship to the father) needs a death certificate of the father of her minor child for the child to receive benefits from the deceased father. The mother would need to demonstrate the relationship between the minor child, herself, and the father prior to her being authorized to request the record on behalf of the minor child. This may be accomplished by presenting a copy of the minor child's birth certificate at the time of the request.
- A **guardian** may receive a copy of the birth certificate of a child who is under his/her care and custody by showing guardianship papers.
- **Foster parents** may receive a copy of a birth certificate of a child who is under their care and custody upon furnishing a copy of their custody papers.
- A **stepparent** may receive a copy of a certificate of a legitimate birth by demonstrating relationship.
- A **father** may receive a copy of a birth record if he is shown as the father on that child's birth record. An **alleged father** may **not** receive a copy of a birth record if he does not appear on the record, unless the alleged father has legal proof of custody or guardianship (court documentation, custody or guardianship papers referencing father's status as the legal father, or a notarized or certified power of attorney document from the mother or her legal representative that states he may receive copies on behalf of the mother). Family members of an alleged father may not receive copies a child's birth certificate unless he is shown on that child's birth certificate. In which case, they must be a member of the registrant's immediate family and may be required to demonstrate a link to the alleged father.
- The **state registrar**, as outlined in section 193.255.4, RSMo, and prescribed in 19 CSR 10-10.090, may authorize vital records access to **entities not normally entitled**—when deemed in the public interest and not for purposes of commercial solicitation or private gain. Specifically, copies of records or data from records are allowed for **public agencies** administering **health, welfare, safety, law enforcement, education or public assistance programs**, and to private agencies approved by the state registrar. Access, in these instances, shall be for statistical or administrative purposes upon such terms or conditions as may be prescribed by regulation, provided that such copies or data shall not be used for purposes other than those for which they were requested unless so authorized by the state registrar.

Example: a local, state, or federal law enforcement agency could submit a signed letter on letterhead outlining the need for a vital record to complete a special investigation.

For additional information regarding vital record access, see the [Missouri Code of State Regulations](#) or contact the Bureau of Vital Records at 573-751-6387.