USCIS Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Chapter 2 - USCIS-Issued Secure Identity Documents

Guidance

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A. Personal Information Used on Secure Identity Documents

USCIS issues a variety of secure identity documents that establish identity and immigration status in the United States. Personal information included on USCIS-issued secure identity documents includes, but is not limited to, a benefit requestor's biometrics, full legal name, date and country of birth, gender, and A-number.

1. Biometrics

USCIS has general authority to require and collect biometrics from any applicant, petitioner, sponsor, derivative, dependent, beneficiary, or requestor filing for any immigration, citizenship, and naturalization benefit.[1]

If the benefit request filed requires biometrics, and the requestor is in the United States, USCIS schedules a biometric services appointment at a local Application Support Center (ASC).[2] If the benefit requestor is outside of the United States, biometrics are captured by a USCIS international office, a U.S. embassy or consulate, or a U.S. military facility. The biometrics collected from the benefit requestor allow USCIS to verify identity and conduct national security and criminal history background checks. USCIS also uses the benefit requestor's biometric information for the initial issuance or replacement of a secure identity document.

2. Full Legal Name

All USCIS-issued secure identity documents contain the benefit requestor's full legal name.[3] Documents USCIS issues do not include nicknames. They do not contain initials, unless an initial appears on the official birth certificate, or the requestor legally changed his or her name to include an initial.

A benefit requestor must provide his or her full legal name on all benefit requests. The requestor's full legal name is comprised of his or her:

- Given name (first name);
- Middle name(s) (if any); and
- Family name (last name).[4]

The legal name is one of the following:

- The requestor's name at birth as it appears on the birth certificate (or other qualifying identity documentation when a birth certificate is unavailable);[5] or
- The requestor's name following a legal name change.

USCIS does not suspend the adjudication of a benefit request pending a court determination of a name change or other efforts by the requestor to establish a new legal name. USCIS creates secure identity documents using the legal name in place when the benefit request is decided.

Name Changes

If the requestor changes his or her name after USCIS issues the secure identity document, the requestor may file an application, with the appropriate fee, to request USCIS re-issue the secure identity document with the new name.[6] The requestor must provide sufficient evidence of the name change. USCIS does not have legal authority to change a person's name. The name change may or may not be recorded on the birth certificate, marriage certificate, or other vital document record.

3. Date of Birth

In general, the official date of birth is the date recorded on the requestor's birth certificate. USCIS recognizes dates of birth based on the Gregorian calendar in the following order: month, day, and year. Some foreign countries issue documents with the date of birth in a different order.[7] Most translations should have the date in the order of the month, day, and year. However, officers should verify the order of a translated date before issuing documents to avoid discrepancies.

If there is a discrepancy between a translated birth certificate and other government-issued documentation, the requestor must provide compelling evidence that the date of birth on the birth certificate is incorrect or miscalculated. For naturalization certificates, USCIS cannot change a recorded date of birth, except to correct a USCIS clerical error.[8]

4. Gender

USCIS-issued documents that display gender or sex identifiers are limited to indicating only female or male. Requestors who have changed their gender should be issued immigration documents that reflect their new gender. Requestors who already possess immigration documents at the time they change gender may request new documents reflecting their post-transition gender by filing the appropriate form for replacement documents. [9]

USCIS recognizes a requestor's gender change when a court or government with jurisdiction recognizes the change, or when a licensed health care professional certifies that the requested gender designation is consistent with that person's gender identity. USCIS issues initial or amended secure identity documents reflecting the changed gender designation if the requestor presents sufficient evidence in support of the change in gender designation along with meeting all other requirements to receive the secure identity document.

USCIS does not require proof of sex reassignment surgery, and officers should not request any records relating to such surgery.[10] If the requestor changed his or her name along with gender, the requestor must submit evidence that they completed any name change procedure according to the relevant U.S. state or foreign law.[11]

B. Delivery of Secure Identity Documents

USCIS mails secure identity documents through the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) to the address provided on a benefit request, unless the requestor requested that USCIS send any secure identity document to the U.S. business address of the attorney of record or accredited representative.[12]

In general, USCIS only sends secure identity documents to U.S. addresses. The requestor may, however, request that any secure identity document be sent to a designated military or diplomatic address for pickup in a foreign country, if permitted.[13] For example, certain travel documents (such as reentry permits and refugee travel documents) may be sent to a U.S. embassy or consulate or USCIS international office for the requestor to pick up, if this request is made when the requestor files the benefit application.[14]

C. Tracking Delivery

Benefit requestors may track the delivery status of their secure identity document by signing up for a Case Status Online account to obtain a tracking number. With a tracking number, requestors may also register for Informed Delivery through USPS to get previews of mail in transit.[15]

D. Making Address Changes

Non-U.S. citizens must report any change of address within 10 days of moving within the United States or its territories.[16] If a mailing address changes after a benefit request is filed, the requestor should update it online with USCIS and USPS as soon as possible to ensure he or she receives any secure identity documents USCIS sends in the mail. If more than one application or petition is pending, the requestor should ensure that USCIS updates the address on all pending benefit requests.

Requestors should use the USPS Look Up a Zip Code tool to ensure they are providing a complete address using the standard abbreviations and formatting recognized by USPS.

Footnotes

[^ 1] See 8 CFR 103.2(b)(9). See 8 CFR 103.16.

[^ 2] For more information, see Preparing for Your Biometric Services Appointment.

[^ 3] See 8 CFR 320.3(b)(1)(viii)-(ix), 8 CFR 322.3(b)(1)(xiii) and 8 CFR 338.1(b). See 6 CFR 37.3 for the full legal name description in the REAL ID Act, Pub. L. 109-13 (PDF) (May 11, 2005).

[^ 4] A first name is sometimes referred to as a given name. A family name or surname may also include a maiden name. See 6 CFR 37.3 for the full legal name description in the Real ID Act, Pub. L. 109-13 (PDF) (May 11, 2005).

[^ 5] There may be instances in which a birth certificate is unobtainable because of country conditions or personal circumstances. In these instances, a requestor may submit secondary evidence or affidavits to establish his or her identity. Any affidavit should explain the reasons primary evidence is unavailable. For more information, see the Department of State Reciprocity Tables for identity documents that cannot be obtained in particular countries and during specific time periods. Asylum applicants may be able to establish their identity, including their full legal name, with testimony alone.

[^ 6] See Chapter 3, Reissuance of Secure Identity Documents [11 USCIS-PM A.3].

[^ 7] Most western countries follow the Gregorian calendar. Other countries follow different calendars including the Hebrew (lunisolar calendar); Islamic (lunar calendar); and Julian (solar calendar). The calendars differ on days, months, and years.

[^ 8]See 8 CFR 338.5. USCIS may, however, change the date of birth on a certificate of citizenship for a person who has a U.S. court order or similar state vital record changing the date of birth. See Volume 12, Citizenship & Naturalization, Part K, Certificates of Citizenship and Naturalization, Chapter 4, Replacements of Certificates of Citizenship and Naturalization [12 USCIS-PM K.4].

[^ 9] See Chapter 3, Reissuance of Secure Identity Documents [11 USCIS-PM A.3].

[^ 10] For more information on documentation a benefit requestor must show to establish a change in gender, see Volume 1, General Policies and Procedures, Part E, Adjudications, Chapter 5, Verification of Identifying Information [1 USCIS-PM E.5].

[^ 11] There may be instances in which evidence of a name change is unobtainable because of country conditions or personal circumstances. In some situations, USCIS permits such requestors to submit secondary evidence or affidavits to establish their identity. Any affidavit should explain the reasons primary evidence is unavailable. For more information, see the Department of State Reciprocity Tables for identity documents that cannot be obtained in particular countries and during specific time periods. Asylum applicants may be able to establish with testimony alone that they completed any name change procedure according to relevant law.

[^ 12] See 8 CFR 103.2(b)(19)(iii). A benefit requestor may also request to change, through written notice to USCIS, that USCIS mail the secure identity document to him or her instead of the attorney of record or legal representative.

[^ 13] For more information regarding mailing secure identity documents overseas, see Travel Documents and Emergency Travel.

[^ 14] In general, if a requestor applies for advance parole while in the United States, and departs the United States before the advance parole document is issued, the requestor may be found inadmissible to the United States upon return, or even if admitted, may be found to have abandoned his or

her application. There is no process for a requestor outside the United States traveling on a valid advance parole document or combo card (a card that combines an employment authorization document (EAD) and advance parole document) to apply for a replacement of a lost or stolen advance parole document to enable him or her to return the United States. In these cases, the requestor should contact the closest USCIS international office or U.S. embassy or consulate.

[^ 15] For more information on how to track the delivery of secure identity documents, see How to Track Delivery of Your Green Card, Employment Authorization Document (EAD), and Travel Document.

[^ 16] See INA 265. See Change of Address Information.

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