



eResponse

On behalf of Rep. Kokoruda, you asked if any states have voluntary adoption registries, which allow adoptees, birth parents, and biological siblings to contact each other if they choose to.

We found several states that have voluntary adoption registries. Generally, such registries are available to adult adoptees, biological parents (or if deceased, their descendants), and adult biological siblings. Such individuals must apply to participate in the registry, provide proof of identity and contact information, and pay a registration fee. Some states, such as Louisiana and Texas, require registrants to complete one hour of mental health counseling before contacting their registry matches. We provide five examples of states' registries below.

Colorado

The Department of Public Health and Environment administers the state's Voluntary Adoption Registry, which is open to adoptees, birth parents, siblings (i.e., adopted, biological, or foster), and relatives of deceased adoptees or birth parents. To register, an individual must submit to the department (1) a notarized application, (2) a \$20 processing fee, (3) proof of identification and relationship to the other parties.

Once a match is made, the department contacts the parties in the manner they choose on the application (i.e., letter or phone). A birth parent is not matched with an adult adoptee without the other birth parent's consent, unless (1) there is only one birth parent listed on the birth certificate, (2) the other birth parent is deceased, or (3) the department cannot locate the other birth parent after an exhaustive search (the birth parent seeking the match must pay the cost of the search)(C.R.S. § 25-2-113.5).

Louisiana

The Department of Children and Family Services established the state's Adoption Voluntary Registry to facilitate voluntary contact between adult adoptees, their birth parents, and biological siblings. The registry is open to:

1. adoptees, biological parents, and biological siblings ages 18 and older;
2. parents, siblings, or descendants of a deceased biological parent;
3. adoptive parents of minor adopted children; and
4. adoptive parents or descendants of a deceased adopted person.

If there is a match after registering, both parties are required to complete one hour counseling. After receiving completed counseling forms from both parties, the registry sends a written letter to the adoptee's counselor (or if a minor or deceased, the party representing the adoptee) providing details of the match. The counselor then must contact the parties confidentially to give them information to contact each other (LA Children's Code, Ch. 15 § 1270).

Rhode Island

By law, the Family Court maintains the state's Voluntary Adoption Reunion Registry open to adoptees ages 21 and older who were born and adopted in Rhode Island, birth parents who surrendered a child for adoption in the state, adult biological siblings, adoptive parents of deceased adoptees, and parents or adult siblings of deceased birth parents.

To participate, an individual must pay a \$25 registration fee and submit a written affidavit to the court consenting to participate in the registry and providing contact information. If the court determines there is a match, it notifies the parties confidentially. It does not release any information related to (1) the adoptive parents or their children (i.e., adoptive siblings) and (2) anyone's income. The court maintains registry participants' affidavits permanently.

In the case where the court verifies a match and releases identifying information, it must, upon the adoptee's written request, certify to the state's vital records office that the adoptee is part of a verified match and entitled to receive an uncertified copy of his or her birth certificate. But, the adoptee can only obtain the birth certificate if each party named on the original birth certificate participates in the registry.

By law, registry information is confidential and cannot be disclosed under the state's Freedom of Information Act. Anyone who discloses identifying information about a biological parent or adult adoptee without the individual's express written consent is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year imprisonment, a fine of up to \$1,000, or both (R.I. § 15-7.2-1 et seq.).

Texas

The Department of State Health Services administers the state's Voluntary Central Adoption Registry, which the legislature established in 1983. The registry allows adoptees born or placed for adoption in Texas, birth parents, and biological siblings ages 18 or older to place their names on the registry and locate other family members who are also registered. To register, an individual must complete an application, provide proof his or her identity and age, and pay a \$30 fee.

A match occurs when an adult adoptee and his or her birth parent or biological sibling voluntarily register. The registry releases identifying information after the match participants complete:

1. a written consent form to release identifying information,
2. one-hour of post-adoption counseling that prepares the individual for the reunion, and
3. a written biography of his or her life with copies of photographs or other visual media (the registry sends the biography when identifying information is exchanged)(Tex. Fam. Code § 162.401).

South Dakota

The Department of Social Services (DSS) maintains the state's Voluntary Adoption Registry, which allows adoptees ages 18 and older who were born in the state, birth parents, and biological siblings ages 18 and older to communicate if they choose. Like the other states described above, the registry is passive, which means that DSS does not search for adoptees or birth parents whose names are not included in the registry. To participate in the registry, an individual must complete and notarize an application. If a match occurs, DSS notifies each party by letter before they release contact information to the parties (SDCL § 25-6-15.2 et seq.).