

## CHAPTER 259

## CHANGE OF NAME, ADOPTION

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**259.11 ORDER; FILING COPIES.**

(a) Upon meeting the requirements of section 259.10, the court shall grant the application unless: (1) it finds that there is an intent to defraud or mislead; (2) section 259.13 prohibits granting the name change; or (3) in the case of the change of a minor child's name, the court finds that such name change is not in the best interests of the child. The court shall set forth in the order the name and age of the applicant's spouse and each child of the applicant, if any, and shall state a description of the lands, if any, in which the applicant and the spouse and children, if any, claim to have an interest. The court administrator shall file such order, and record the same in the judgment book. If lands be described therein, a certified copy of the order shall be filed for record, by the applicant, with the county recorder of each county wherein any of the same are situated. Before doing so the court administrator shall present the same to the county auditor who shall enter the change of name in the auditor's official records and note upon the instrument, over an official signature, the words "change of name recorded." Any such order shall not be filed, nor any certified copy thereof be issued, until the applicant shall have paid to the county recorder and court administrator the fee required by law. No application shall be denied on the basis of the marital status of the applicant.

(b) When a person applies for a name change, the court shall determine whether the person has a criminal history in this or any other state. The court may conduct a search of national records through the Federal Bureau of Investigation by submitting a set of fingerprints and the appropriate fee to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. If it is determined that the person has a criminal history in this or any other state, the court shall, within ten days after the name change application is granted, report the name change to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. The person whose name is changed shall also report the change to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension within ten days. The court granting the name change application must explain this reporting duty in its order. Any person required to report the person's name change to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension who fails to report the name change as required under this paragraph is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

(c) Paragraph (b) does not apply to either:

(1) a request for a name change as part of an application for a marriage license under section 517.08; or

(2) a request for a name change in conjunction with a marriage dissolution under section 518.27.

**History:** 2005 c 136 art 8 s 6

**259.21 DEFINITIONS.**

*[For text of subs 1 to 3, see M.S.2004]*

Subd. 4. **Guardian.** "Guardian" means a guardian of the ward appointed by a court of competent jurisdiction.

*[For text of subs 5 to 12, see M.S.2004]*

**History:** 2005 c 10 art 4 s 15

**259.23 JUVENILE COURT, JURISDICTION.**

Subdivision 1. **Venue.** (a) Except as provided in section 260C.101, subdivision 2, the juvenile court shall have original jurisdiction in all adoption proceedings. The proper venue for an adoption proceeding shall be the county of the petitioner's residence, except as provided in paragraph (b).

(b) Venue for the adoption of a child committed to the guardianship of the commissioner of human services shall be the county with jurisdiction in the matter according to section 260C.317, subdivision 3.

(c) Upon request of the petitioner, the court having jurisdiction over the matter under section 260C.317, subdivision 3, may transfer venue of an adoption proceeding involving a child under the guardianship of the commissioner to the county of the petitioner's residence upon determining that:

(1) the commissioner has given consent to the petitioner's adoption of the child or that consent is unreasonably withheld;

(2) there is no other adoption petition for the child that has been filed or is reasonably anticipated by the commissioner or the commissioner's delegate to be filed; and

(3) transfer of venue is in the best interests of the child.

Transfer of venue under this paragraph shall be according to the rules of adoption court procedure.

(d) In all other adoptions, if the petitioner has acquired a new residence in another county and requests a transfer of the adoption proceeding, the court in which an adoption is initiated may transfer the proceeding to the appropriate court in the new county of residence if the transfer is in the best interests of the person to be adopted. The court transfers the proceeding by ordering a continuance and by forwarding to the court administrator of the appropriate court a certified copy of all papers filed, together with an order of transfer. The transferring court also shall forward copies of the order of transfer to the commissioner of human services and any agency participating in the proceedings. The judge of the receiving court shall accept the order of the transfer and any other documents transmitted and hear the case; provided, however, the receiving court may in its discretion require the filing of a new petition prior to the hearing.

Subd. 2. **Contents of petition.** The petition shall be signed by the petitioner and, if married, by the spouse. It shall be verified, and filed in duplicate. The petition shall allege:

(a) The full name, age and place of residence of petitioner, and if married, the date and place of marriage;

(b) The date petitioner acquired physical custody of the child and from what person or agency;

(c) The date of birth of the child, if known, and the state and county where born;

(d) The name of the child's parents, if known, and the guardian if there be one;

(e) The actual name of the child, if known, and any known aliases;

(f) The name to be given the child if a change of name is desired;

(g) The description and value of any real or personal property owned by the child;

(h) That the petitioner desires that the relationship of parent and child be established between petitioner and the child, and that it is to the best interests of the child for the child to be adopted by the petitioner.

In agency placements, the information required in clauses (d) and (e) shall not be required to be alleged in the petition but shall be transmitted to the court by the commissioner of human services or the agency.

*[For text of subd 3, see M.S.2004]*

**History:** 2005 c 159 art 2 s 3,4

**259.24 CONSENTS.**

Subdivision 1. **Exceptions.** No child shall be adopted without the consent of the child's parents and the child's guardian, if there be one, except in the following instances:

(a) Consent shall not be required of a parent not entitled to notice of the proceedings.

(b) Consent shall not be required of a parent who has abandoned the child, or of a parent who has lost custody of the child through a divorce decree or a decree of dissolution, and upon whom notice has been served as required by section 259.49.

(c) Consent shall not be required of a parent whose parental rights to the child have been terminated by a juvenile court or who has lost custody of a child through a final commitment of the juvenile court or through a decree in a prior adoption proceeding.

(d) If there be no parent or guardian qualified to consent to the adoption, the consent shall be given by the commissioner. After the court accepts a parent's consent to the adoption under section 260C.201, subdivision 11, consent by the commissioner or commissioner's delegate is also necessary. Agreement to the identified prospective adoptive parent by the responsible social services agency under section 260C.201, subdivision 11, does not constitute the required consent.

(e) The commissioner or agency having authority to place a child for adoption pursuant to section 259.25, subdivision 1, shall have the exclusive right to consent to the adoption of such child. The commissioner or agency shall make every effort to place siblings together for adoption. Notwithstanding any rule to the contrary, the commissioner may delegate the right to consent to the adoption or separation of siblings, if it is in the child's best interest, to a local social services agency.

*[For text of subd 2, see M.S.2004]*

Subd. 2a. **Time of consent; notice of intent to consent to adoption.** (a) Not sooner than 72 hours after the birth of a child and not later than 60 days after the child's placement in a prospective adoptive home, a person whose consent is required under this section shall execute a consent.

(b) Unless all birth parents from whom consent is required under this section are involved in making the adoptive placement and intend to consent to the adoption, a birth parent who intends to execute a consent to an adoption must give notice to the child's other birth parent of the intent to consent to the adoption prior to or within 72 hours following the placement of the child, if the other birth parent's consent to the adoption is required under subdivision 1. The birth parent who receives notice shall have 60 days after the placement of the child to either consent or refuse to consent to the adoption. If the birth parent who receives notice fails to take either of these actions, that parent shall be deemed to have irrevocably consented to the child's adoption. The notice provisions of chapter 260C and the rules of juvenile protection procedure shall apply to both parents when the consent to adopt is executed under section 260C.201, subdivision 11.

(c) When notice is required under this subdivision, it shall be provided to the other birth parent according to the Rules of Civil Procedure for service of a summons and complaint.

*[For text of subds 3 and 4, see M.S.2004]*

Subd. 5. **Execution.** All consents to an adoption shall be in writing, executed before two competent witnesses, and acknowledged by the consenting party. In addition, all consents to an adoption, except those by the commissioner, the commissioner's agent, a licensed child-placing agency, an adult adoptee, or the child's parent in a petition for adoption by a stepparent, shall be executed before a representative of the commissioner, the commissioner's agent, or a licensed child-placing agency. All consents by a parent:

(1) shall contain notice to the parent of the substance of subdivision 6a, providing for the right to withdraw consent unless the parent will not have the right to withdraw consent because consent was executed under section 260C.201, subdivision 11, following proper notice that consent given under that provision is irrevocable upon acceptance by the court as provided in subdivision 6a; and

(2) shall contain the following written notice in all capital letters at least one-eighth inch high:

“This agency will submit your consent to adoption to the court. The consent itself does not terminate your parental rights. Parental rights to a child may be terminated only by an adoption decree or by a court order terminating parental rights. Unless the child is adopted or your parental rights are terminated, you may be asked to support the child.”

Consents shall be filed in the adoption proceedings at any time before the matter is heard provided, however, that a consent executed and acknowledged outside of this state, either in accordance with the law of this state or in accordance with the law of the place where executed, is valid.

Subd. 6a. **Withdrawal of consent.** Except for consents executed under section 260C.201, subdivision 11, a parent’s consent to adoption may be withdrawn for any reason within ten working days after the consent is executed and acknowledged. Written notification of withdrawal of consent must be received by the agency to which the child was surrendered no later than the tenth working day after the consent is executed and acknowledged. On the day following the tenth working day after execution and acknowledgment, the consent shall become irrevocable, except upon order of a court of competent jurisdiction after written findings that consent was obtained by fraud. A consent to adopt executed under section 260C.201, subdivision 11, is irrevocable upon proper notice to both parents of the effect of a consent to adopt and acceptance by the court, except upon order of the same court after written findings that the consent was obtained by fraud. In proceedings to determine the existence of fraud, the adoptive parents and the child shall be made parties. The proceedings shall be conducted to preserve the confidentiality of the adoption process. There shall be no presumption in the proceedings favoring the birth parents over the adoptive parents.

*[For text of subs 7 and 8, see M.S.2004]*

**History:** 2005 c 136 art 15 s 1-4

## 259.41 ADOPTION STUDY.

*[For text of subs 1 and 2, see M.S.2004]*

Subd. 3. **Background check; affidavit of history.** (a) At the time an adoption study is commenced, each prospective adoptive parent must:

(1) authorize access by the agency to any private data needed to complete the study;

(2) provide all addresses at which the prospective adoptive parent and anyone in the household over the age of 13 has resided in the previous five years; and

(3) disclose any names used previously other than the name used at the time of the study.

(b) When the requirements of paragraph (a) have been met, the agency shall immediately begin a background check, on each person over the age of 13 living in the home, consisting, at a minimum, of the following:

(1) a check of criminal conviction data with the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and local law enforcement authorities;

(2) a check for data on substantiated maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult and domestic violence data with local law enforcement and social services agencies and district courts; and

(3) for those persons under the age of 25, a check of juvenile court records.

Notwithstanding the provisions of section 260B.171 or 260C.171, the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, local law enforcement and social services agencies, district courts, and juvenile courts shall release the requested information to the agency completing the adoption study.

(c) When paragraph (b) requires checking the data or records of local law enforcement and social services agencies and district and juvenile courts, the agency shall check with the law enforcement and social services agencies and courts whose jurisdictions cover the addresses under paragraph (a), clause (2). In the event that the agency is unable to complete any of the record checks required by paragraph (b), the agency shall document the fact and the agency's efforts to obtain the information.

(d) For a study completed under this section, when the agency has reasonable cause to believe that further information may exist on the prospective adoptive parent or household member over the age of 13 that may relate to the health, safety, or welfare of the child, the prospective adoptive parent or household member over the age of 13 shall provide the agency with a set of classifiable fingerprints obtained from an authorized law enforcement agency and the agency may obtain criminal history data from the National Criminal Records Repository by submitting fingerprints to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. The agency has reasonable cause when, but not limited to, the:

(1) information from the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension indicates that the prospective adoptive parent or household member over the age of 13 is a multistate offender;

(2) information from the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension indicates that multi-state offender status is undetermined;

(3) the agency has received a report from the prospective adoptive parent or household member over the age of 13 or a third party indicating that the prospective adoptive parent or household member over the age of 13 has a criminal history in a jurisdiction other than Minnesota; or

(4) the prospective adoptive parent or household member over the age of 13 is or has been a resident of a state other than Minnesota in the prior five years.

(e) At any time prior to completion of the background check required under paragraph (b), a prospective adoptive parent may submit to the agency conducting the study a sworn affidavit stating whether they or any person residing in the household have been convicted of a crime. The affidavit shall also state whether the adoptive parent or any other person residing in the household is the subject of an open investigation of, or have been the subject of a substantiated allegation of, child or vulnerable-adult maltreatment within the past ten years. A complete description of the crime, open investigation, or substantiated abuse, and a complete description of any sentence, treatment, or disposition must be included. The affidavit must contain an acknowledgment that if, at any time before the adoption is final, a court receives evidence leading to a conclusion that a prospective adoptive parent knowingly gave false information in the affidavit, it shall be determined that the adoption of the child by the prospective adoptive parent is not in the best interests of the child.

(f) For the purposes of subdivision 1 and section 259.47, subdivisions 3 and 6, an adoption study is complete for placement, even though the background checks required by paragraph (b) have not been completed, if each prospective adoptive parent has completed the affidavit allowed by paragraph (e) and the other requirements of this section have been met. The background checks required by paragraph (b) must be completed before an adoption petition is filed. If an adoption study has been submitted to the court under section 259.47, subdivision 3 or 6, before the background checks required by paragraph (b) were complete, an updated adoption study report which includes the results of the background check must be filed with the adoption petition. In the event that an agency is unable to complete any of the records checks required by paragraph (b), the agency shall submit with the petition to adopt an affidavit documenting the agency's efforts to complete the checks.

*[For text of subd 4, see M.S.2004]*

**History:** 2005 c 159 art 2 s 5

### 259.67 ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

*[For text of subd 1, see M.S.2004]*

**Subd. 2. Adoption assistance agreement.** The placing agency shall certify a child as eligible for adoption assistance according to rules promulgated by the commissioner. The placing agency shall not certify a child who remains under the jurisdiction of the sending agency pursuant to section 260.851, article 5, for state-funded adoption assistance when Minnesota is the receiving state. Not later than 30 days after a parent or parents are found and approved for adoptive placement of a child certified as eligible for adoption assistance, and before the final decree of adoption is issued, a written agreement must be entered into by the commissioner, the adoptive parent or parents, and the placing agency. The written agreement must be fully completed by the placing agency and in the form prescribed by the commissioner and must set forth the responsibilities of all parties, the anticipated duration of the adoption assistance payments, and the payment terms. The adoption assistance agreement shall be subject to the commissioner's approval, which must be granted or denied not later than 15 days after the agreement is entered.

The amount of adoption assistance is subject to the availability of state and federal funds and shall be determined through agreement with the adoptive parents. The agreement shall take into consideration the circumstances of the adopting parent or parents, the needs of the child being adopted and may provide ongoing monthly assistance, supplemental maintenance expenses related to the adopted person's special needs, nonmedical expenses periodically necessary for purchase of services, items, or equipment related to the special needs, and medical expenses. The placing agency or the adoptive parent or parents shall provide written documentation to support the need for adoption assistance payments. The commissioner may require periodic reevaluation of adoption assistance payments. The amount of ongoing monthly adoption assistance granted may in no case exceed that which would be allowable for the child under foster family care and is subject to the availability of state and federal funds.

*[For text of subd 3, see M.S.2004]*

**Subd. 4. Eligibility conditions.** (a) The placing agency shall use the AFDC requirements as specified in federal law as of July 16, 1996, when determining the child's eligibility for adoption assistance under title IV-E of the Social Security Act. If the child does not qualify, the placing agency shall certify a child as eligible for state funded adoption assistance only if the following criteria are met:

(1) Due to the child's characteristics or circumstances it would be difficult to provide the child an adoptive home without adoption assistance.

(2)(i) A placement agency has made reasonable efforts to place the child for adoption without adoption assistance, but has been unsuccessful; or

(ii) the child's licensed foster parents desire to adopt the child and it is determined by the placing agency that the adoption is in the best interest of the child.

(3) The child has been a ward of the commissioner, a Minnesota-licensed child-placing agency, or a tribal social service agency of Minnesota recognized by the Secretary of the Interior. The placing agency shall not certify a child who remains under the jurisdiction of the sending agency pursuant to section 260.851, article 5, for state-funded adoption assistance when Minnesota is the receiving state.

(b) For purposes of this subdivision, the characteristics or circumstances that may be considered in determining whether a child is a child with special needs under United States Code, title 42, chapter 7, subchapter IV, part E, or meets the requirements of paragraph (a), clause (1), are the following:

(1) The child is a member of a sibling group to be placed as one unit in which at least one sibling is older than 15 months of age or is described in clause (2) or (3).

(2) The child has documented physical, mental, emotional, or behavioral disabilities.

(3) The child has a high risk of developing physical, mental, emotional, or behavioral disabilities.

(4) The child is adopted according to tribal law without a termination of parental rights or relinquishment, provided that the tribe has documented the valid reason why the child cannot or should not be returned to the home of the child's parent.

(c) When a child's eligibility for adoption assistance is based upon the high risk of developing physical, mental, emotional, or behavioral disabilities, payments shall not be made under the adoption assistance agreement unless and until the potential disability manifests itself as documented by an appropriate health care professional.

*[For text of subds 5 to 10, see M.S.2004]*

**History:** 2005 c 159 art 2 s 6,7

### 259.75 STATE ADOPTION EXCHANGE.

**Subdivision 1. Establishment; contents; availability.** The commissioner of human services shall establish an adoption exchange that contains a photograph and description of each child who has been legally freed for adoption. The exchange service shall be available to all local social service agencies and licensed child-placing agencies whose purpose is to assist in the adoptive placement of children.

*[For text of subds 2 to 9, see M.S.2004]*

**History:** 2005 c 159 art 2 s 8

### 259.79 ADOPTION RECORDS.

**Subdivision 1. Content.** (a) The adoption records of the commissioner's agents and licensed child-placing agencies shall contain copies of all relevant legal documents, responsibly collected genetic, medical and social history of the child and the child's birth parents, the child's placement record, copies of all pertinent agreements, contracts, and correspondence relevant to the adoption, and copies of all reports and recommendations made to the court.

(b) The commissioner of human services shall maintain a permanent record of all adoptions granted in district court in Minnesota regarding children who are:

(1) under guardianship of the commissioner or a licensed child-placing agency according to section 260C.201, subdivision 11, or 260C.317;

(2) placed by the commissioner, commissioner's agent, or licensed child-placing agency after a consent to adopt according to section 259.24 or under an agreement conferring authority to place for adoption according to section 259.25; or

(3) adopted after a direct adoptive placement approved by the district court under section 259.47.

Each record shall contain identifying information about the child, the birth or legal parents, and adoptive parents, including race where such data is available. The record must also contain: (1) the date the child was legally freed for adoption; (2) the date of the adoptive placement; (3) the name of the placing agency; (4) the county where the adoptive placement occurred; (5) the date that the petition to adopt was filed; (6) the county where the petition to adopt was filed; and (7) the date and county where the adoption decree was granted.

(c) Identifying information contained in the adoption record shall be confidential and shall be disclosed only pursuant to section 259.61.

*[For text of subds 2 and 3, see M.S.2004]*

**History:** 2005 c 159 art 2 s 9

**259.85 POSTADOPTION SERVICE GRANTS PROGRAM.**

Subdivision 1. **Purpose.** The commissioner of human services shall establish and supervise a postadoption service grants program to be administered by local social service agencies for the purpose of preserving and strengthening adoptive families. The program will provide financial assistance to adoptive parents who are not receiving adoption assistance under section 259.67 to meet the special needs of an adopted child that cannot be met by other resources available to the family.

*[For text of subds 2 to 5, see M.S.2004]*

**History:** 2005 c 159 art 2 s 10

**259.88 DATA AND BEST PRACTICES.**

Subdivision 1. **Required data for postadoption search services.** (a) The commissioner of human services must collect data from all adoption agencies for six months in order to establish benchmarks to evaluate postadoption search services. The data must include:

- (1) the percentage of requests resulting in successful location of the other party;
- (2) the percentage of requests resulting in successful completion of the commissioner's designated form for family medical and social history;
- (3) the time from request for search to completion of search; and
- (4) the number and type of efforts used to complete the search.

(b) Agencies must provide the number of search requests received during the six-month period prior to June 2, 2005, to the commissioner of human services.

(c) The data must be used to establish reasonable efforts in developing the best practices under subdivision 2.

Subd. 2. **Best practices.** The commissioner of human services, in consultation with the commissioner of health, must develop best practice guidelines for conducting postadoption services.

**History:** 2005 c 129 s 1