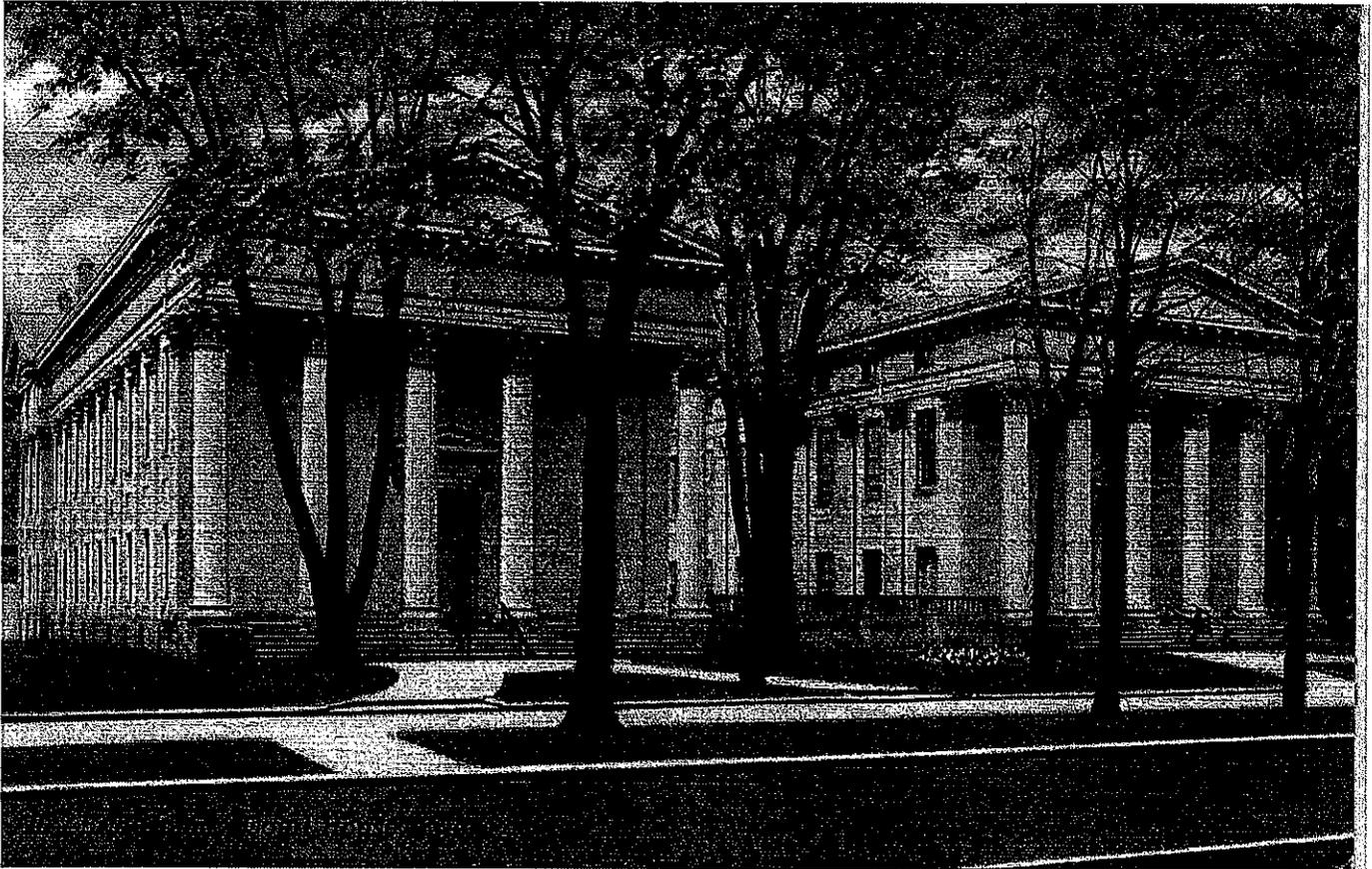


NAME CHANGE PROCEDURE

ERIE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

SELF HELP GUIDE



Revised 2/20/2026

**PLEASE NOTE: YOU MUST RESIDE IN
ERIE COUNTY IN ORDER TO FILE A
PETITION FOR A NAME CHANGE IN ERIE
COUNTY**

**IT IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED THAT
YOU CONSULT AN ATTORNEY**

Obtaining the services of an attorney is recommended because this process has very specific requirements. If any of them are not met, your name change will not be successful.

DISCLAIMER

THE STAFF IN ANY COURT OFFICE ARE NOT PERMITTED TO GIVE YOU LEGAL ADVICE. THE INFORMATION IN THIS PACKET IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR PROFESSIONAL LEGAL ADVICE. THE COURT ASSUMES NO RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCEPTS NO LIABILITY FOR ACTIONS TAKEN BY USERS OF THESE DOCUMENTS, INCLUDING RELIANCE ON THEIR CONTENTS. IF YOU WANT TO OBTAIN THE SERVICES OF AN ATTORNEY BUT DO NOT KNOW WHOM TO CONTACT, YOU SHOULD CONTACT THE ERIE COUNTY COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION LAWYER REFERRAL & INFORMATION SERVICE AT (814) 459-4411.

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UNDERSTANDING THE NAME CHANGE PROCESS

A. INTRODUCTION

An adult may seek to have the court enter a decree changing his/her name by following certain procedures set forth by Pennsylvania law. In general, a court will grant such a request if the reason for the change is lawful and proper procedures had been completed.

A parent may also seek to have a child's name changed in a manner that is similar, but not the same, as the procedure for an adult.

B. PETITION

The filing of a petition starts the name change process. The petition must be in a form as provided by the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 204.1, concerning format and Rule 206.1, regarding the content and form of petitions. The petition must include the following information:

1. name of petitioner;
2. address of the petitioner's current residence;
3. addresses of the places where the petitioner has resided during the past five (5) years;
4. statement indicating the petitioner's desire for change of name;
5. statement of the reasons for the request;
6. statement indicating whether the petitioner has a prior record of criminal convictions;
7. statement indicating whether there are any judgments or liens of record filed against the petitioner;
8. if the petitioner is seeking a name change for a minor, a statement indicating why such a change is in the best interest of the child; and
9. the name which the petitioner would like to adopt.

C. NOTICE

Once a petition is filed, the court will enter an order requiring that notice of a hearing be provided by publication in one newspaper of general circulation in Erie County and in one edition of the *Erie County Legal Journal*. The notice will be in the form designated by the court.

If a parent is seeking to change the name of a minor, it is necessary to serve a copy of the petition and notice of hearing on a parent who is not joining in the name change request. Other potential parties such as the Office of Children and Youth may also need to be served.

D. PRIOR TO DATE OF HEARING

Before a hearing is conducted, the petitioner must do the following:

1. Cause a search to be conducted by the Erie County Clerk of Records and any other county where petitioner resided in the past five (five) years to determine if there are any judgments or like decrees of record listed against the petitioner on the official records of the county. You must contact other counties to obtain the certified judgment searches or hire an agency/company to do the searches for you; and
2. Request that the Pennsylvania State Police verify the petitioner's criminal record. This is accomplished by providing the Pennsylvania State Police with a set of fingerprints in the manner required by law. (Note: This process is likely to require several weeks to be completed.)

E. HEARING

A hearing will be conducted at the time and place designated by the court and as set forth in the notice. At the time of the hearing, the court will do the following:

1. Determine if the petitioner has complied with all notice requirements;
2. Receive testimony from the petitioner with regard to those matters set forth in the petition and any other matters that may be relevant to the determination of the request;
3. Review the certificate of the Clerk of Records to determine if any liens or judgments appear of record;
4. Review the report from the Pennsylvania State Police to determine if the petitioner has a criminal record;
5. Consider the testimony of any person who is objecting to the name change; and
6. Decide whether the petitioner's request should be granted.

F. DECREE / ORDER

If the petitioner's request is granted, the court will enter an order specifying the petitioner's new name. This document must be filed with the Prothonotary Office of the Clerk of Records.

G. HOW TO FILE A NAME CHANGE PETITION FOR AN ADULT

THESE ARE IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS - PLEASE PRINT OR WRITE LEGIBLY

1. Fill out the Name Change Petition (pg. 1), along with a signed and dated Verification (pg. 2).
2. Take the completed forms with the Notice of Hearing Order (pg. 3), to Judge Emily Merski's Chambers, Room 221, on the 2nd Floor of the Erie County Courthouse where you will get a hearing date.
3. Take your completed forms to the Prothonotary Office in Room 120 on the 1st floor of the Erie County Courthouse, you will pay a filing fee and be given a docket number.

4. While at the Prothonotary office ask for a fingerprint card (an example of one is attached to your packet).
 - a. Take that card to the Pennsylvania State Police for your fingerprints to be taken.
 - b. Bring the fingerprint card back to the Prothonotary office, and they will request a criminal records check from the Pennsylvania State Police.
 - c. After the records check is complete in approximately two to three weeks, a report is sent back to the Prothonotary office and your file will be prepared for the rest of the name change procedure;
5. As soon as possible after filing your petition take a copy of your Name Change Petition to two newspapers of general circulation such as the **Times Publishing Company** at 205 W 12th St or your local newspaper and one to the **Erie County Bar Association**, 429 West 6th Street, and ask to have your petition published. Notice must be received at the Erie County Bar Association/*Erie County Legal Journal* office by 3:00 p.m. the Friday preceding the desired publication date. (The Erie County Legal Journal only published on Fridays.) You will pay a fee for this service.
 - a. Your petition will be published and you should receive a copy of the proofs of publication from each of these businesses within a few weeks.
 - b. Take these proofs of publication to the Prothonotary office for filing.
6. On the day that your hearing is scheduled the court will obtain your completed file from the Prothonotary office, which will include an up to the minute "lien search" which determines if you have any liens filed against you. This will be made a part of the record. **If you have resided in another county in the past five (5) years, you will also need to provide a certified judgment/lien search from that jurisdiction.**
7. **Your day in court:** You will appear in court at the scheduled time and provide testimony as required. The Judge will determine whether your name change request will be granted. If it is granted the Judge will sign the Order
8. You must then take all of your paperwork, along with the Signed Name Change Order to the Prothonotary for filing.

H. **LEGAL ADVICE**

If you have any questions regarding legal issues about the name change process, you are encouraged to seek the advice of an attorney.

Erie County court employees are not allowed to give legal advice.

IN RE: THE NAME : IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
CHANGE PETITION OF: : OF ERIE COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA
: :
: DOCKET NO:

(PRINT your name here)

PETITION FOR CHANGE OF NAME

The Petitioner _____ hereby files this Petition for Change
your name here
pursuant to 54 Pa.C.S section 701 et seq, and in support thereof represents as follows:

1. I _____ an adult individual and resident of Erie County,
your name here
Pennsylvania with a current address of _____. The Petitioner's
date of birth is _____.

2. The Petitioner's current phone number _____.

3. The Petitioner seeks to change his/her name from _____
to _____.

4. The reason the Petitioner seeks to change his/her name is:

5. Are there any judgments or liens filed against the Petitioner? If yes, please list:

6. Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense? (not including summary
offenses). If yes, please list:

Wherefore the Petitioner requests this Honorable Court to enter a Decree changing
the name of the Petitioner from: _____
PRINT your current name here

to: _____
PRINT your new name here

Respectfully Submitted by

signature here

IN RE: THE NAME
CHANGE PETITION OF:

: IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
: OF ERIE COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA
: DOCKET NO.

(PRINT your name here)

VERIFICATION

I, _____, verify that the statements made in this
(your name here)

petition is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I understand that the statements herein are made subject to the penalties of 18 Pa. C.S. section 4904 relating to unsworn falsification to authorities.

Signature of Petitioner

Date: _____

IN RE: THE NAME : IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
CHANGE PETITION OF: : OF ERIE COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA
:
: DOCKET NO.

(PRINT your name here)

NOTICE OF HEARING ORDER

AND NOW, this ____ day of _____, 20____, a hearing on the
Petition for Change of Name is scheduled for the____ day of
_____, 20____, at _____o'clock __. M. in Courtroom No.____ on
the 2nd floor at Erie County Courthouse, 140 W. 6th St., Erie, Pa. 16501

Petitioner is directed to give notice of the filing of the Petition for
Change of Name and the date and time set for the hearing by publication
once in the **Erie Times News** and once in the **Erie County Legal Journal** (Erie
County Bar Association), and submit proof of publication to this court.

BY THE COURT

J.

IN RE: THE NAME CHANGE OF

: IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
: ERIE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

PRINT your name here

:
:
:
:
: DOCKET NO. _____

ORDER OF NAME CHANGE

AND NOW, this ____ day of _____, 20____, upon consideration of the within Petition for Change of Name, and upon presentation of proof of publication of notice as required by law, together with proof that there are no judgment or decrees of record or any other matter of like character against _____
your name here

And it appearing that there is no lawful objection to the request of the Petitioner, it is hereby **ORDERED, ADJUDGED and DECREED** that the name of _____ is hereby changed to
your current name here

your new name here

BY THE COURT,

J

IN RE: THE NAME CHANGE PETITION

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF

OF:

ERIE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

DOCKET NO:

AFFIDAVIT OF RESIDENCY

I, _____, The Petitioner in the above-captioned matter do depose and say that, for the past five (5) years prior to filing the Petition for Change of Name in the above-captioned matter, I have lived at the following residences (City/Town, County, and State):

****If you have resided in another county in the past five (5) years, you will also need to provide a certified judgment/ lien search from that jurisdiction****

Date & Signature of Petitioner

I verify that the statements made in this Affidavit are true and correct. I understand that false statements herein are made subject to the penalties of 18 Pa.C.S. 4904, relating to unsworn falsification to authorities.

Date & Signature of Petitioner

Plaintiff
vs.

Defendant

: IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
: OF ERIE COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA
:
: Docket NO. _____
:

Entry of Appearance as a Self-Represented Party

Please complete each section by marking the boxes and providing all applicable information.

Section 1

In the above captioned matter I am the (choose one) Plaintiff Defendant
I have chosen not to be represented by an attorney for the following action (choose one)
 Custody Divorce Support Protection from Abuse Name Change

Section 2 (choose one)

- This is a new case in which I will be representing myself and have chosen not to hire an attorney.
- This is not a new case and Attorney _____ previously represented me. I have chosen not to be represented by said attorney and request the attorney of record be removed as my counsel. (If you choose this option, you must check one of the following boxes)
 - The Withdrawal of Appearance signed by Attorney _____ is attached.
 - I will send a copy of this notice to Attorney _____, who previously represented me.

Section 3

My entire Address for the purpose of receiving all future pleadings and other legal notices is:

- This is my home address This is not my home address

Number and Street or P.O Box number City, State Zip Code

Telephone number Fax number (optional) Email address (optional)

I UNDERSTAND I MUST FILE A NEW FORM EVERY TIME MY ADDRESS OR TELEPHONE NUMBER IS CHANGED AND MUST PROVIDE A COPY OF THIS FORM TO THE COURT OFFICE ADMINISTERING MY CASE (i.e Domestic Relations Office, Custody Office or PFA Office) ALL ATTORNEYS OF RECORD AND SELF-REPRESENTED PARTIES INVOLVED IN THIS CASE. I FURTHER UNDERSTAND THAT IF I PROVIDE A FAX NUMBER OR E-MAIL ADDRESS ABOVE THAT I AM AGREEING TO ACCEPT SERVICE OF PLEADINGS AND NOTICES VIA ONE OF THOSE ELECTRONIC MEANS, RATHER THAN PAPER COPY.

I understand that by deciding to represent myself, the Court will hold me to standards of knowledge regarding the statutory law, evidence law, Local and State Rules of Procedure and applicable case law and that I must be fully prepared to meet those responsibilities.

I verify that the statements made in this Entry of Appearance as a Self-Represented Party are true and correct. I understand that if I make false statements herein, that I am subject to the penalties of 18 Pa.C.S. §4904 relating to unsworn falsification to authorities.

Date Signature

After filling out this form, you must file it with the Prothonotary in Room 120 of the Erie County Courthouse. You must also give a copy to all other self-represented parties and all attorneys of record.