

# Name Change:

Apply for free legal aid online at [MontanaLawHelp.org](http://MontanaLawHelp.org) or call/text Kaia, YHDP Coordinator, at (406) 594-1971



## How can I legally change my name?

To change your name on your birth certificate, you must file papers with a court. Some common reasons for requesting a name change are:

- You do not like your name and would like a new one
- You want to reclaim a family name
- You want to escape a violent situation by creating a new legal identity
- You want to have the same last name as your partner, but you are unmarried

*A name change cannot be done to avoid debt, hide a criminal record, or for any other improper reason.*

Tribal communities may have different rules for name change. If you are a tribal member living in a tribal community, view MLSA's article *Tribal Court Resources for Name and Gender Change* at [MontanaLawHelp.org](http://MontanaLawHelp.org) or call MLSA for advice on your specific situation.

## Pros of formal name changes:

- You can pick your new name
- You can request a new birth certificate and social security number after the court approves your name change
- A new legal name could help you make a fresh start
- You may ask the court to seal your court papers requesting a new name, which may help keep the link between your old and new names confidential
- An abuser or anyone trying to do you harm may have a harder time finding you if you have a new identity

## Cons:

- You have to go through a court proceeding
- The court proceeding and public notice may cost money- you can apply for a waiver of court fees
- Some people say it can be mentally and emotionally exhausting making the adjustment to a new name
- Your name must be changed with every agency you interact with and it may cause complications in receiving your public benefits.

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Please contact MLSA for additional information and assistance.

Name change forms can be found at: [courts.mt.gov/Forms/namechange](http://courts.mt.gov/Forms/namechange)

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## Changing your name for safety:

If you are trying to escape a dangerous situation, please seek out the advice of a local advocate for legal advice and safety planning.

To find a support organization in your community: <http://www.mcadsv.com/victim-service-programs-by-region/>

## National Domestic Violence Hotline:

1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY: 1-800-787-3224

## National Teen Dating Violence Hotline:

1-866-331-9474 or TTY: 1-866-331-8453

## How can MLSA help me?

MLSA provides FREE legal information, forms, advice, and representation to eligible clients.

MLSA's Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP) Coordinator can provide you with referrals to agencies in your community and link you with free civil legal assistance.

Have more questions about your legal rights? Visit:

[MontanaLawHelp.org](http://MontanaLawHelp.org)

