

Genealogy Records & Resources

What types of records are available from the New York State Department of Health for genealogy research?

Vital records registration started in New York State outside of New York City in 1881. Generally, the New York State Department of Health provides uncertified copies of the following types of records for genealogy research purposes:

- Birth certificates - if on file for at least 75 years and the person whose name is on the birth certificate is known to be deceased.
- Death certificates - if on file for at least 50 years.
- Marriage certificates - if on file for at least 50 years and both spouses are known to be deceased.

Are the time periods ever waived?

The time periods are waived for direct-line descendants. A direct line descendant is a person in the direct line of descent, i.e., the child, grandchild, great grandchild of the person whose record is requested. The direct-line descendant applicant must provide the following:

- Proof of their relationship to the person whose record they are requesting.
- Proof of the death of the person whose birth certificate they are requesting.
- Proof of the death of both spouses whose marriage certificate they are requesting.

Dual Citizenship and Vital Records

Dual Citizenship

A person may be a citizen of more than one country. This can happen automatically, based on the citizenship laws of the countries involved. It can happen by marriage. It can also happen by voluntary application based on a country's laws and requirements. For information about U.S. law and the potential issues regarding application for citizenship with another country, visit the [U.S. State Department Services Dual Nationality web page](#).

Often when applying for citizenship with another country, individuals are required to provide documentation of lineage in the form of their own birth and marriage records and the birth, death and marriage records of their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and beyond.

Requirements of Foreign Countries

The processes and requirements for applying for citizenship are developed by each individual country and vary from country to country. Many countries require certified copies of vital events in order to verify an applicant's claim of lineage. Access to certified copies of Vital Records in New York State is restricted by Public Health Law Section 4174, Section 4139 and Domestic Relations Law Section 20.

Certificates of Dissolution of Marriage

[Certificates of Dissolution of Marriage](#), for all of New York State, from 1963 to the present are available from the State of New York. The divorce decree and divorce records prior to 1963 must be obtained from the [County Clerk](#) of the County where the decree was issued. This is usually the County where the plaintiff resided.

Genealogy Copies of Birth, Death and Marriage Records

If the country where you are applying for citizenship will accept genealogy copies (uncertified copies) of vital records, please visit our [Genealogy page](#) for ordering information.

Requirements for Obtaining Certified Copies of Vital Records from the New York State Department of Health for Dual Citizenship

Identification Requirements - application *must* be submitted with copies of either A *or* B:

1. One (1) of the following forms of valid photo-ID:

- Driver license
 - State issued non-driver photo-ID card
 - Passport
 - U.S. Military issued photo-ID
2. Two (2) of the following showing the applicant's name and address:
- Utility or telephone bills
 - Letter from a government agency dated within the last six (6) months

Important Notes:

- Failure to include necessary identification will result in rejection of your application.
- Copy of Passport required in addition to the above ID if request is made from a foreign country that requires a U.S. Passport for travel.

Apostille or Authentication

Countries will sometimes require that records to be submitted with citizenship applications be authenticated or apostilled. For information about this process, visit our [Apostille information page](#).

Documentation of Relationship

When applying for records, to which you are not otherwise entitled, for dual citizenship purposes, you may be required to include documentation of your relationship to the person whose record you are requesting. Uncertified copies of birth, marriage or death certificates showing relationship to the person are sufficient. We may also accept other types of documentation such as copies of official records from a religious body (for example, baptismal or other records). We cannot approve your documentation in advance of your application. You must submit the documentation you have and we will contact you if it is not sufficient.

Grandparent or Great-Grandparent's Death Record:

The applicant must include along with the completed and signed [application for a death certificate](#), a completed and notarized [Affidavit to Request Certified Copy of Death Certificate, documentation demonstrating relationship](#) and a copy of his or her identification.

Parent, Grandparent or Great-Grandparent's Birth Record:

Only the person on the record, the parents on the record or a person with a [New York State Court](#) order may order a certified copy of a [birth certificate](#).

1. Still Living: If the person whose record is being requested is still living.
 - The parent/grandparent/great-grandparent may submit a completed [birth certificate application form](#) for his or her own record. The record will be sent to the requester who may then give it to the applicant for dual citizenship. The requester must include a copy of his or her identification.
 - The parent/grandparent/great-grandparent may submit a completed [birth certificate application form](#) for his or her own record and include a signed and notarized letter stating that he or she gives the department permission to send the document to the

applicant for dual citizenship. The requester must include a copy of his or her identification.

- The applicant may apply if he or she has power of attorney (POA) for the parent/grandparent/great-grandparent. The POA must be signed by the person named on the birth certificate. The language stated in the POA must be sufficient to allow the person given POA to obtain the birth certificate. Applicant must include an attorney certified copy of the power of attorney (certification must have been done within the last year), a copy of the applicant's identification and a completed [birth certificate application form](#).
2. Deceased: If the person whose record is being requested has died.
- A court order from a [New York State Court](#) of competent jurisdiction is required. The Department of Health cannot advise you on obtaining a court order. You may wish to consult an attorney familiar with New York State Public Health Law. The applicant must submit a court certified copy of the order along with a copy of the applicant's identification, the appropriate fee and a completed [birth certificate application form](#)

Parent, Grandparent or Great-Grandparent's Marriage Record:

Only a spouse on the record, a person with a judicial or other proper purpose or a person with a [New York State Court](#) order may order a certified copy of the [marriage record](#).

1. Still Living: If either party to the marriage is still living.
- Either party to the marriage may request his or her own marriage record. The record will be sent to the requester who may then give it to the applicant for dual citizenship. The requester must include a copy of his or her identification along with a completed [marriage certificate application form](#).
 - Either party to the marriage may request his or her own marriage record and include a signed and notarized letter stating that he or she gives the department permission to send the document to the applicant for dual citizenship. The requester must include a copy of his or her identification along with a completed [marriage certificate application form](#).
 - If the applicant has power of attorney (POA) for either party to the marriage, the applicant may request the record. The POA must be signed by the one of the spouses on the marriage certificate. The language stated in the POA must be sufficient to allow the person given POA to obtain the marriage certificate. Applicant must include an attorney certified copy of the power of attorney (certification must have been done within the last year), a copy of the applicant's identification and a completed [marriage certificate application form](#)
2. Deceased: If both parties to the marriage have died.
- Applicant must include a completed [marriage certificate application form](#) copies of the death records, a copy of applicant's identification, [documentation demonstrating relationship](#) and a completed and notarized [Affidavit to Request Certified Copy of Marriage Certificate](#).

Parent, Grandparent or Great-Grandparent's Dissolution of Marriage Certificate:

Please note: There are two types of [divorce records](#) available.

First, there is the divorce decree. This is the document prepared by the court, setting forth the terms and conditions of the divorce. It is signed by the judge and filed with the County Clerk of the County

where the decree was issued. This is usually the County where the plaintiff resided. For information about obtaining a copy of a divorce decree, contact the appropriate County Clerk. Please note that if the divorce was granted before January 1, 1963, the divorce decree is the only type of document available.

Second, there is a divorce certificate filed with the New York State Department of Health for divorces granted on or after January 1, 1963. The divorce certificate contains basic information about the spouses, and the date and place the marriage ended.

Only a spouse on the record or a person with a [New York State Court](#) order may order a certified copy of the dissolution of marriage record.

1. Still Living: If either party to the marriage is still living.
 - Either party to the marriage may request his or her own dissolution of marriage record. The record will be sent to the requester who may then give it to the applicant for dual citizenship. The requester must include a copy of his or her identification along with a completed [dissolution of marriage certificate application form](#).
 - Either party to the marriage may request his or her own dissolution of marriage record and include a signed and notarized letter stating that he or she gives the department permission to send the document to the applicant for dual citizenship. The requester must include a copy of his or her identification along with a completed [dissolution of marriage certificate application form](#).
 - If the applicant has power of attorney (POA) for either party to the marriage, the applicant may request the record. The POA must be signed by the one of the spouses on the dissolution of marriage certificate. The language stated in the POA must be sufficient to allow the person given POA to obtain the dissolution of marriage certificate. Applicant must include an attorney certified copy of the power of attorney (certification must have been done within the last year), a copy of the applicant's identification and a completed [dissolution of marriage certificate application form](#)
2. Deceased: If both parties to the marriage have died.
 - A court order from a [New York State Court](#) of competent jurisdiction is required. The Department of Health cannot advise you on obtaining a court order. You may wish to consult an attorney familiar with New York State Domestic Relations Law. The applicant must submit a court certified copy of the order along with a copy of the applicant's identification, the appropriate fee and a completed [divorce certificate application form](#).

Obtaining a Court Order

The New York State Department of Health cannot advise you on legal matters including how to obtain a court order.

You can find information about court procedures, representing yourself and finding an attorney on the [New York State Court System](#) web site.

Translation Services

The New York State Department of Health does not offer [translation services for Vital Records](#) or supporting documents.

Apostille for Vital Records

What is an "Apostille" or "Authentication"?

An "Apostille" or "Authentication" is a means of certifying the authenticity of the signature of the issuing authority, the capacity in which the signer was acting, and the identity of any stamp or seal attached to the document. This provides countries with a means of verifying documents issued by a local authority in another country.

If you will be presenting your vital record to a government agency in another country, you should contact the consulate of that country to determine what the requirements are to have your record accepted. You may need an apostille or authentication for the record. You may also be required to have the record and supporting documents [translated](#).

New York State Vital Records

An apostille or authentication for New York State is issued by the New York State Department of State. For further information and instructions on obtaining an apostille or authentication, visit the [New York State Department of State](#) web site.

Translation Services

The New York State Department of Health does not offer [translation services for Vital Records](#) or supporting documents.