

Chapter 101.

Names of Persons.

§ 101-1. Legislature may regulate change by general but not private law.

The General Assembly shall not have power to pass any private law to alter the name of any person, but shall have power to pass general laws regulating the same. (Const., Art. II, s. 11; Rev., s. 2146; C.S., s. 2970.)

§ 101-2. Procedure for changing name; petition; notice.

(a) A person who wishes, for good cause shown, to change his or her name must file an application before the clerk of the superior court of the county in which the person resides, after giving 10 days' notice of the application by publication in the area designated by the clerk of superior court for posting notices in the county.

(b) The publication in subsection (a) of this section is not required if the applicant:

- (1) Is a participant in the address confidentiality program under Chapter 15C of the General Statutes; or
- (2) Provides evidence that the applicant is a victim of domestic violence, sexual offense, or stalking. This evidence may include any of the following:
 - a. Law enforcement, court, or other federal or state agency records or files.
 - b. Documentation from a program receiving funds from the Domestic Violence Center Fund, if the applicant is alleged to be a victim of domestic violence.

(c) The application and the court's entire record of the proceedings relating to the applicant's name change is not a matter of public record where the applicant has complied with subsection (b)(1) or (b)(2) of this section. Records qualifying under this subsection shall be maintained separately from other records, shall be withheld from public inspection, and may be examined only by order of the court or with the written consent of the applicant.

(d) An application to change the name of a minor child may be filed by the child's parent or parents, guardian appointed under Article 6 of Chapter 35A of the General Statutes, or guardian ad litem appointed under Rule 17 of the Rules of Civil Procedure, and this application may be joined in the application for a change of name filed by the parent or parents. A change of parentage or the addition of information relating to parentage on the birth certificate of any person is governed by G.S. 130A-118. An application to change the name of a minor child shall not be filed without the consent of both parents if both parents are living, unless one of the following applies:

- (1) A minor who has reached the age of 16 may file an application to change his or her name with the consent of the parent who has custody of the minor and has supported the minor, without the necessity of obtaining the consent of the other parent, when the clerk of court is satisfied that the other parent has abandoned the minor.
- (2) A parent may file an application on behalf of the minor without the consent of the other parent if the other parent has abandoned the minor child.
- (3) A parent may file an application on behalf of the minor without the consent of the other parent if the other parent has been convicted of any of the following offenses against the minor or a sibling of the minor:
 - a. Felonious or misdemeanor child abuse.
 - b. Taking indecent liberties with a minor in violation of G.S. 14-202.1.

- c. Rape or any other sex offense in violation of Article 7B of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes.
- d. Incest in violation of G.S. 14-178.
- e. Assault, communicating a threat, or any other crime of violence.

For purposes of subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection, abandonment may be shown by filing a copy of an order of a court of competent jurisdiction adjudicating that parent's abandonment of the minor. If a court of competent jurisdiction has not declared the minor to be an abandoned child, the clerk, on 10 days' written notice by registered or certified mail, directed to the last known address of the parent alleged to have abandoned the child, may determine whether the parent has abandoned the child. If the parent denies that the parent abandoned the child, this issue of fact shall be transferred and determined as provided in G.S. 1-301.2. If abandonment is determined, the consent of the parent is not required. Upon final determination of this issue of fact the proceeding shall be transferred back to the special proceedings docket for further action by the clerk. A parent who files an application on behalf of a minor pursuant to subdivision (3) of this subsection shall submit proof of the other parent's conviction to the clerk at the time of filing. (1891, c. 145; Rev., s. 2147; C.S., s. 2971; 1947, c. 115; 1953, c. 678; 1955, c. 951, s. 3; 1957, c. 1442; 1959, c. 1161, s. 7; 1971, c. 444, s. 1; 1995, c. 509, s. 135.2(f); 1999-216, s. 13; 2007-116, s. 1; 2013-42, s. 1; 2015-181, s. 47; 2019-243, s. 27; 2024-33, s. 10.)

§ 101-3. Contents of petition.

The applicant shall state in the application his true name, county of birth, date of birth, the full name of parents as shown on birth certificate, the name he desires to adopt, his reasons for desiring such change, and whether his name has ever before been changed by law, and, if so, the facts with respect thereto. (1891, c. 145; Rev., s. 2147; C.S., s. 2972; 1945, c. 37, s. 1; 1957, c. 1233, s. 1.)

§ 101-4. Proof of good character to accompany petition.

The applicant shall also file with said petition proof of his good character, which proof must be made by at least two citizens of the county who know his standing: Provided, however, proof of good character shall not be required when the application is for the change of name of a child under 16 years of age. (1891, c. 145; Rev., s. 2148; C.S., s. 2973; 1963, c. 206.)

§ 101-5. Name change application requirements; grounds for clerk to order or deny name change; certificate and record.

(a) A person who desires to change his or her true name may apply to the clerk of superior court of the county where the person resides and must submit all of the following information to the clerk in support of the application for a name change:

- (1) The applicant's true name, county of birth, date of birth, the full name of parents as shown on birth certificate, and the name sought to be adopted.
- (2) The results of a state and national criminal history record check conducted within 90 days of the date of application by the State Bureau of Investigation, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or a Channeler approved by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The requirements of this subdivision shall not apply to an application to change the name of a minor less than 16 years of age.
- (3) A sworn statement as to the following:
 - a. That the applicant is a bona fide resident of, and domiciled in, the county where the change of name is sought.

b. Whether or not the applicant has outstanding tax or child support obligations.

(b) The clerk shall instruct the applicant on the process for having fingerprints taken and submitted for the criminal history record check, including providing information on law enforcement agencies or acceptable service providers. The clerk may require the applicant to provide any other information that the clerk determines is reasonably necessary for the fair and complete review of the name change application.

(c) The clerk shall review all the information contained in the application and otherwise available to the clerk to determine whether there is good and sufficient reason to grant or to deny the name change.

(d) Except as prohibited by G.S. 101-6(c), if the clerk finds that good and sufficient reasons exist for the change of name, and the applicant has met the requirements of subsection (a) of this section, it is the clerk's duty to issue an order changing the name of the applicant from that person's true name to the name sought to be adopted. The order shall contain all of the following:

- (1) The true name, the county of birth, the date of birth, the full name of parents as shown on birth certificate, and the name sought to be adopted.
- (2) The clerk's summary of the information reviewed in connection with the application.

The clerk shall issue to the applicant a certificate under the clerk's hand and seal of office, stating the change made in the applicant's name, and shall also record the application and order on the docket of special proceedings in his court.

(e) The clerk shall forward the order granting the name change to:

- (1) The State Registrar of Vital Statistics on a form provided by the Registrar. If the applicant was born in North Carolina, the State Registrar shall note the change of name of the individual or individuals specified in the order on the birth certificate of that individual or those individuals and shall notify the register of deeds in the county of birth. If the applicant was born in another state of the United States, the State Registrar shall forward the notice of change of name to the registration office of the state of birth. If the name change is not a matter of public record pursuant to G.S. 101-2(c), the clerk shall notify the State Registrar; however, the State Registrar shall not notify the register of deeds in the applicant's county of birth or the registration office of the state of birth.
- (2) The Department of Public Safety, which shall update its records to show the name change.

(f) If the clerk finds that good and sufficient reasons exist to deny the applicant's request for a name change, it is the clerk's duty not to issue an order changing the name of the applicant from that person's true name to the name sought to be adopted. The order denying the name change shall state the reasons for the denial. If the applicant desires to appeal the clerk's decision, the applicant must petition the resident superior court judge within 30 days of the date of the order denying the name change to request a reconsideration of the application. The reconsideration decision of the resident superior court judge is final and not subject to appeal. An unsuccessful applicant on reconsideration is subject to a waiting period of 12 months from the date of the adverse decision of the resident superior court judge before the applicant may submit another name change application. A successful applicant on reconsideration shall be granted the name change by the clerk in like manner as prescribed by subsection (d) of this section.

(g) Upon information obtained by the clerk of fraud or material misrepresentation in the application for a name change, the clerk on his or her own motion may set aside the order granting the name change after notice to the applicant and opportunity to be heard. If the clerk sets aside the name change order, the clerk shall notify the State Registrar of Vital Statistics and the Department of Public Safety. (1891, c. 145; Rev., ss. 2149, 2150; C.S., s. 2974; 1955, c. 951, s. 4; 1957, c. 1233, s. 2; 1971, c. 444, s. 2; 2011-61, s. 8; 2011-303, s. 1; 2012-194, s. 19; 2013-42, s. 2; 2014-100, s. 17.1(oo).)

§ 101-6. Effect of change; only one change, except as provided.

(a) When the order is made and the applicant's name changed, he is entitled to all the privileges and protection under his new name as he would have been under the old name. No person shall be allowed to change his name under this Chapter but once, except that he shall be permitted to resume his former name upon compliance with the requirements and procedure set forth in this Chapter for change of name, and except as provided in subsection (b) of this section.

(b) For good cause shown, and upon compliance with the requirements and procedure set forth in this Chapter for change of name, the name of a minor child may be changed not more than two times under this Chapter.

(c) A sex offender who is registered in accordance with Article 27A of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes is prohibited from obtaining a change of name under this Chapter. (1891, c. 145; Rev., ss. 2147, 2149; C.S., s. 2975; 1945, c. 37, s. 2; 1991, c. 333, s. 1; 2008-218, s. 9.)

§ 101-7. Recording name change.

When the name of any individual, corporation, partnership, or association has been changed in a manner provided by law, any attorney licensed to practice law in this State may file an affidavit with the clerk of superior court stating facts concerning the change of name. The clerk shall cause the affidavit to be filed and indexed among the records of his office, pursuant to G.S. 7A-180(3) and G.S. 7A-343(3). The clerk shall also forward a copy of the affidavit under the seal of his office to the clerk of superior court of any other county named in the affidavit where it shall also be filed and indexed in accordance with this section. Affidavits filed and indexed under this section are for informational purposes only and neither the affidavit nor the manner of its filing and indexing shall in any manner affect the rights or liabilities of any person. (1971, c. 592, s. 1.)

§ 101-8. Resumption of name by widow or widower.

A person at any time after the person is widowed may, upon application to the clerk of court of the county in which the person resides setting forth the person's intention to do so, resume the use of her maiden name or the name of a prior deceased husband or of a previously divorced husband in the case of a widow, or his premarriage surname in the case of a widower. The application shall set forth the full name of the last spouse of the applicant, shall include a copy of the spouse's death certificate, and shall be signed by the applicant in the applicant's full name. The clerks of court of the several counties of this State shall record and index such applications in the manner required by the Administrative Office of the Courts. (1979, c. 768; 1981, c. 564, s. 2; 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 565, s. 2.)