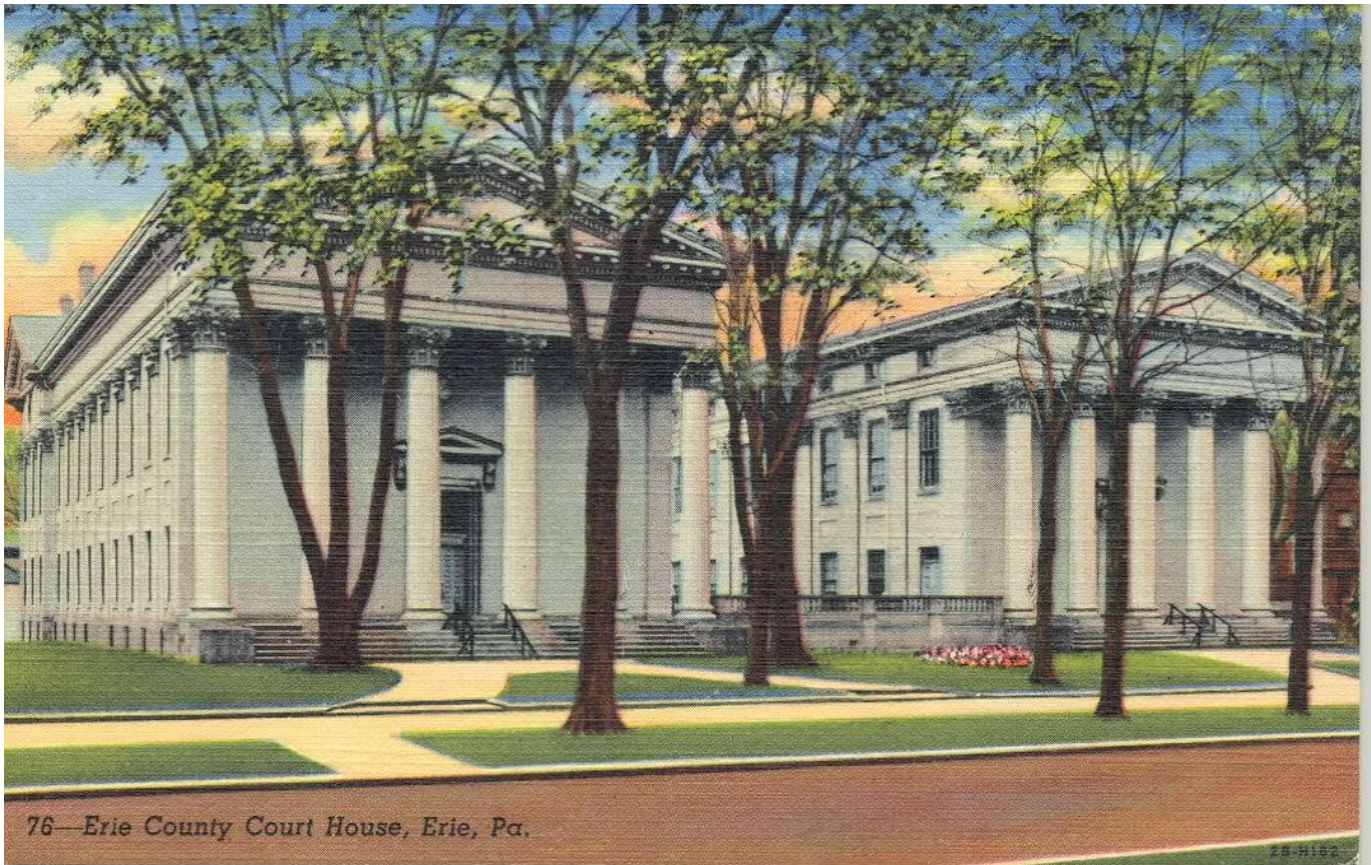


NAME CHANGE PROCEDURE

ERIE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

SELF HELP GUIDE



Revised 3/22/2019

INDEX

Understanding the Name Change Process

A. INTRODUCTION

B. PETITION

C. NOTICE

D. PRIOR TO DATE OF HEARING

E. HEARING

F. DECREE / ORDER

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

H. LEGAL ADVICE

FORMS FOR YOUR COMPLETION

Pg. 1. *Petition for Change of Name*

Pg. 2. *Verification*

Pg. 3. *Notice of Hearing Order*

Pg. 4 *Order for Change of Name*

Examples only: *Proofs of Publication in the Erie Legal Journal and Erie Times News and of the Fingerprint Card*

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 Clerk of Records to determine if there are any judgments or like decrees of record listed against the petitioner on the official records of the county; 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 the Court Administrator's Office, Room 205, on the 2nd Floor of the Erie County Courthouse where you will get a Judge assignment.
3. Once the Judge has been assigned take your completed forms to the Judge's chambers and ask the secretary for a hearing date.

4. Make 3 extra copies, one for yourself to keep and the other two to use for publication. (See below for publication instructions). The law library on the ground floor has a copy machine for public use.
5. 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.
6. 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;
7. 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. 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.
8. 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 and a fee will be charged for this following the final hearing.
9. **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
10. You must then take all of your paperwork, along with the Signed Name Change Order to the Prothonotary for filing. You will pay the fee for the "lien search" and this process is complete.

PLEASE NOTE: You may want to make a few extra copies of the **signed Order** for yourself because you will need to file a **certified copy** with assorted agencies such as Social Security Office, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Penndot, etc.

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:

(your name here)

PETITION FOR CHANGE OF NAME

The Petitioner _____ hereby file 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 _____. I have lived at
the following addresses for the past five years:

2. The Petitioner's date of birth is _____.

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: _____
your current name here

to: _____
print your new name here

Respectfully Submitted by

your current name here

IN RE: THE NAME
CHANGE PETITION OF:

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

: DOCKET NO.

(your name here)

VERIFICATION

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

petition are 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
:

(your name here) : DOCKET NO.

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

:
:
:
:

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