

Section 4:

What Do I Do After I Fill Out the Forms?



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Summary

This section tells you how to submit the forms after you've filled them out.

Also, after you submit them, you:

- wait to see if you filled them out correctly
- wait to see if the court clerk sends them to the judge for review

Contents

In this section, you will learn:

- How to submit your forms
- What kind of copies you get back from the court
- How to know if the forms you submitted were filled out correctly
- How long you will have to wait before you find out if your petition has been sent to the judge for review



What should I do after I fill out all the forms?

Submission Checklist

Instructions: After you fill out the forms, check off the steps that are listed below. Keep this for your records.

Refer to the Checklist on Page 32 (“Questions for the Court Clerk”) to complete this section.

- Do you have each of the forms the court clerk told you to file?
- Were there any special instructions the clerk gave you, and did you follow them?

Did you:

- Fill all the forms in completely?
- Sign and date the forms in all the places that asked for your signature?

After you signed the forms, did you make:

- at least one copy for the court
- one copy for your own records

With the petition, did you include:

- a copy of your adoptive birth certificate
- a copy of your marriage certificate (if you are a married woman, and you use your husband’s last name)
- copies of all evidence you have (“exhibits”) about your Indian heritage

Did you:

- Include the required fees, or the completed fee waiver application forms?
- Include one or more self-addressed stamped envelopes if you submitted your forms by mail?
- Remember to put the right amount of postage on them?

Write the date you mailed your forms or brought them to the court clerk here: _____

Write the address you mailed or brought your forms to here: _____

How do I submit the forms?

Follow the court clerk's instructions. Either:

- Bring your forms to the court clerk/court house in person **or**
- Send them to the mailing address the court clerk gave you

TIP: Most counties accept forms in the mail, but you can always bring them into the court clerk in person.

Make sure to write a cover letter to the court clerk if you mail your documents.

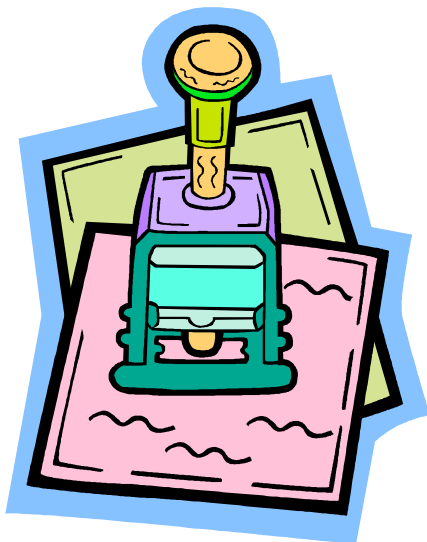
You can find a sample cover letter in Section 7 — **Resource E**. You may have to change the wording so it matches the kind of forms, the number of copies, and the number of self-addressed stamped envelopes you are sending.

Do I get back official copies of the forms I submit to the court clerk?

Yes. You should get back official copies of the petitions, court orders, letters you write to the judge, and/or pre-printed forms you submit.

- You submit one original and one copy of each of your petitions, court orders, letters you write to the judge, and/or preprinted forms to the court clerk.
- The court clerk stamps “filed” on the copy of the petition, letter to the judge, or pre-printed form and either gives it back to you in person when you submit it, or mails it to you in your self-addressed stamped envelope.
- You also get copies of each court order you submit. However, you will have to wait until after the judge signs them to get the court orders back. The court clerk will stamp the orders “filed” and send them to you after the judge signs them.

TIP: These stamped, filed copies are called “**conformed copies.**” You should keep track of what you get back from the court, and when you get it. Since you get the documents back one by one, you may want to use the “Receipt Checklist” on Page 52 to help you keep track.



How do I find out if the forms I submitted were filled out right?

The court clerk will not accept the forms and give them to the judge to review unless they are filled out completely.

If you bring your forms to the courthouse in person:

- The court clerk will look at them right then and there and tell you if there are any problems.
- If there are no problems, the court clerk will hand you conformed copies of your forms.
- If there are problems, the court clerk will explain what you have to do to fix them. You will have to change the forms and submit them to the clerk again.

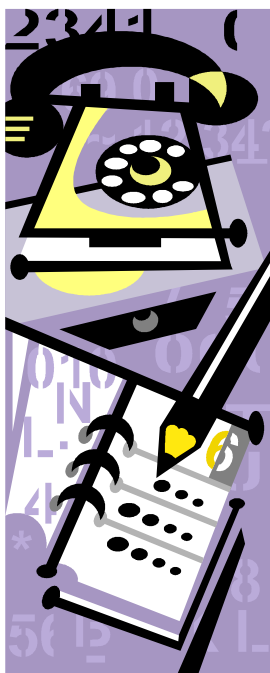
If the court clerk won't accept your petition, but won't explain what's wrong with it, call your local CILS office.

If you mail your forms:

- and there are no problems, the court clerk should mail you conformed copies of your forms.
- and there are problems, the court clerk will call either call you and tell you to pick them up, or mail them back to you.

How long will I have to wait for the court clerk to call me or mail my forms back to me?

- Generally, if there is something wrong with your forms, the court clerk will call you or mail your forms back to you within two to three weeks. If you do not hear back from the court clerk, you should give the clerk a call to find out if the forms were mailed back to you.
- However, many court clerks do not have a lot of experience with unsealing birth records, so they may take long to process your forms. If you call and they say there is a delay in filing your forms, you should write down what they tell you and give them a call in a few days to see if they have fixed the delay.



Receipt Checklist

I have received the following documents from the court:

- | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------|
| Fee waiver application | <input type="checkbox"/> YES (Date: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Fee waiver order | <input type="checkbox"/> YES (Date: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Conformed copy of petition | <input type="checkbox"/> YES (Date: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Conformed copy of letter to judge | <input type="checkbox"/> YES (Date: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Conformed copy of pre-printed county form | <input type="checkbox"/> YES (Date: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Signed copy of DSS order | <input type="checkbox"/> YES (Date: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Signed copy of Vital Records order | <input type="checkbox"/> YES (Date: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Certified copy of original birth certificate | <input type="checkbox"/> YES (Date: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

N/A = not applicable (doesn't apply to my situation)