



## Adoptees seek out their original birth certificates

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Adopted people can now get a copy of their birth certificates for the first time in Illinois.

Previously, the state of Illinois sealed birth records of adopted people born in the state. But a law passed a couple of years ago allowed people born before 1946 to get their birth certificates. Now, adoptees born after that time will get their chance.

State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago) said the law will make it easier for biological families to get in contact with one another. She said the majority of people involved with adoption want to be reconnected. The law puts the burden on those wishing to remain anonymous to file a request with the state.

"But this is a piece of legislation not about searching because that dog hunted already. This is a simple restoration of a basic human right," she said.

Feigenholtz herself was adopted. She was able to reunite with her birth mother through an adoption registry. She said having access to the birth certificate will allow people to learn more about their identity.

"It represents turning the corner on adoption, on shame and secrecy. It represents giving us our original identity," she said.

People can apply for their birth certificate through the Illinois Department of Public Health's Division of Vital Records.

Birth parents can still remain anonymous by filing a request through the state before the adoptee requests the document. Parents could also request no contact but choose to release their information on the birth certificate.

Adoptees can request that a state-appointed intermediary initiate search for the birth parent after five or more years have passed since the parent filed for anonymity.

Once a birth parent dies, anonymity on the document will be lifted.