

# Know Your Rights: Identification

\*This fact sheet is for educational purposes only. Nothing here should be considered legal advice. Please consult a lawyer for more specific information.\*  
\*Updated as of March 2025\*

## Proof of Identification

- **Importance**
  - Apply for a job, opening a bank account, renting an apartment, applying for a driver's license
- **Examples of "proof of identification"**
  - Birth certificate, driver's license, social security card, passport, valid ID issued by the state of Massachusetts or another U.S. state/territory
  - If you do not have any form of identification, you should first get a copy of your birth certificate

## Getting Your Birth Certificate, Social Security Card, and Mass ID

- **How to Get a Copy of Your Birth Certificate**
  - Born in Massachusetts:
    - Request a copy from the Massachusetts Registry of Vital Records and Statistics
      - You will need to provide your name, date of birth, and place of birth
    - Online
      - <https://www.vitalchek.com/v/>
    - By Phone
      - Call the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics: 617-740-2600
    - Mail
      - Complete an application at:
        - [https://www.mass.gov/ordering-a-certificate\\_gI=1\\*12bry7r\\*\\_ga\\*NjUzNjY2MjUzLjE2NjMwODM0MTk.\\*\\_ga\\_MCLPEGW7WM\\*MTY5NTY3ODcyNS4zLjAuMTY5NTY3ODcyNS4wLjAuMA](https://www.mass.gov/ordering-a-certificate_gI=1*12bry7r*_ga*NjUzNjY2MjUzLjE2NjMwODM0MTk.*_ga_MCLPEGW7WM*MTY5NTY3ODcyNS4zLjAuMTY5NTY3ODcyNS4wLjAuMA)
        - Send it with a check of \$32 to the Massachusetts Registry of Vital Records and Statistics Bayside Office Center (150 Mount Vernon St., First Floor Dorchester, MA 02125)
    - In-person
      - Go to the Massachusetts Registry of Vital Records and Statistics Bayside Office Center (150 Mount Vernon St., First Floor Dorchester, MA 02125)
  - If you were born outside of the U.S., you should contact the Embassy or Consulate for the country in which you were born
  - If you were born in the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a link to each state and the guidelines for applying for a birth certificate
- **Social Security Card**
  - Provide documents showing proof of U.S. citizenship or identity, such as a U.S. birth certificate
  - Complete an application: <https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf>
  - Mail/take the application and documents to a social security office
  - You must present original documents (not copies) or copies certified by the agency that first issued the document, like a certified birth certificate from the Registry
  - If you are 18+ and set up a Social Security account, you can apply for a replacement card online
- **Mass ID**
  - Need to be at least 14
  - You do not hold a driver's license in any jurisdiction
  - You are a resident of Massachusetts
  - <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-massachusetts-identification-card-mass-id>

# Getting Your Driver's License

- **Driver's License**

- Steps
  - Collect the required documentation
  - Pass a written test
  - Get your learner's permit
  - Pass a driving test
- Rules
  - If you are 16 or older, you can apply to get your learner's permit which allows you to practice driving under supervision.
    - If you have held a learner's permit for at least six months and you are 16½ - to 18-years old, you can apply for your Junior Operator License which allows you to drive unsupervised with restrictions
  - If you hold a valid Massachusetts learner's permit and you are 18 or older, you can apply to get your full adult license which allows you to drive with no restrictions
- To schedule your road test either for your Junior Operator License or your full adult license, you can
  - Go online at [mass.gov/how-to/schedule-your-road-test](https://mass.gov/how-to/schedule-your-road-test)
  - Call the RMV Automated Service Line at (866) MASSRMV (627-7768)

## Changing Your Name

- File a name change if you are 18+ through a court name change proceeding
  - Filing in-person or submitting required forms by mail to the Probate and Family Court in the county where you live

- a **Petition to Change Name of Adult (CJP 27)**;
- a certified copy of your birth certificate (long form) which is available from the Registry of Vital Records or from the city or town where you were born.
  - Birth certificates that are not written in English must include a written translation signed by the person translating the birth certificate with a statement that they are fluent in the foreign language and English and that the translation is a true and accurate translation. The translator's signature must be notarized; and
- if you have changed your name in the past, you must file the certified document showing the name change for each time your name changed. Examples of this are a marriage certificate, Judgment of Divorce, or other court decree of name change.
- A **Court Activity Record Information (CARI) and Warrant Management System Release Request Form (CJP 34)**.

## Fake IDs and Identity Theft

- A fake ID includes personal information that is not yours either with:
  - Fake information
  - The information of someone else
- Consequences of using a fake ID
  - punishable with up to 3 months of imprisonment
  - Authorizes police to make an arrest and hold them in jail for up to 24 hours (except on Sundays and Federal holidays)
- What to do if you think your identity has been stolen
  - Make a report at your local police office
  - Contact your bank accounts and have them freeze your account
- To prevent identity theft, limit how much information you provide and to whom

