

# ZOE'S FUN AND EASY GUIDE TO CHANGING YOUR NAME IN MICHIGAN

(FOR TRANS\* FOLK)

**NOTE: Steps 3 and 4 only apply to people 22 years of age or older. If you're under 22 and don't have a criminal record, you don't need to worry about the background check.**

**Step 1. Pick your name.** For example, someone given the macho name Aaron at birth might later feel the need to change it to the far more feminine-sounding Erin. Whatever your reasons, make sure it's something you'll be happy with in the long run!

**Step 2. Fill out a "Petition to Change Name" form.** You can download the pdf for the form here:

<http://courts.mi.gov/Administration/SCAO/Forms/courtforms/namechange/pc51.pdf>.

Make a copy. Bring the form to the Circuit Court in your county of residence, and pay them the filing fee. Give them an addressed envelope with postage paid for them to send you the notice for your court date. While you're there, go ahead and pay the fee to your newspaper at the same time if they'll let you. You'll need to do this at some point anyway, because by law, your name change has to be run in the local newspaper. You can also bring along a letter from a psychologist stating that you're at an appropriate stage to change your name. Residents of Ingham County can pay these fees in downtown Lansing at the 30<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court at the Veterans Memorial Courthouse at 313 W. Kalamazoo. This court's mailing address is

30<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court/Family Division  
Attn.: Name Changes  
PO BOX 40771  
Lansing, MI 48901-7971

**Step 3. Get your fingerprints taken.** This can be accomplished at any local police agency. Bring a copy of your "Petition to Change Name" form. If that doesn't feel like a safe environment for you, you might want to bring a friend along. If your City Hall has a police department, they can take your prints too.

**Step 4. Send it all to the State Police.** Mail a copy of the "Petition to Change Name," the fingerprint, and the fee for a background check to the Michigan State Police, made payable to the State of Michigan. For more info, go here:

<http://cc.ingham.org/Portals/CC/Documents/Name%20Change/5-2012%20NC%20Fingerprint%20Info.pdf>. The mailing address for this is

Michigan State Police  
Criminal Records Division  
P.O. Box 30634  
Lansing, Michigan 48909

**Step 5. Wait.** This will probably take longer if you had to do steps 3 and 4, because the Michigan State Police will conduct a background check and forward the fingerprints to the FBI, who will conduct their own check, before the State Police submits its report to the court, who will let you know about your court date. My court date was scheduled just over two months from when I sent my info out to the police, so make sure you plan ahead and give yourself enough time before you need to have your name legally changed. If you have a criminal record you'll have to give sufficient reason for your name change or it will be presumed to be for fraudulent intent.

**Step 6. Show up to court at the appointed time.** You'll be there alongside anybody else who is having their name changed that day. The judge will ask you why you want to change your name. Then you'll have to raise your hand and swear that you are not making the name for any fraudulent purpose. This will all take roughly 30 seconds, then the judge will stamp his seal on a court order saying your name has legally changed. Congratulations! You'll get a "certified copy" (the one with the raised seal) and a "true copy." These will be the only documentation you'll have of your name change, so don't lose them. You'll need to take them with you to change your name with other organizations.

**Step 7. Legwork.** You can get a new birth certificate at the Vital Records Office, a new driver's license and voter registration card at the Secretary of State, and a new Social Security Card at the Social Security Office. You can do some of this by mail and some online. I went in person everywhere. Other places where you may need to change your name include but are not limited to your place of employment, your bank or financial institution, your doctor's office, and your school. In some cases you'll have to wait a couple more weeks for your new documentation to be mailed to you, so again, plan ahead.

**Fees and costs (may vary)**

Court filing fee: \$160

Newspaper announcement: \$63.50

Fingerprint card (if 22 or up): \$6

Background check fee (if 22 or up): \$46.50

Live birth certificate: \$40

Each extra copy of the birth certificate: \$12

Driver's License update: \$9

So the total cost of a name change for a person 22 or older, with an extra birth certificate copy, is **\$335**. But remember, not all of these costs will have to be paid at one time.

**GOOD LUCK!**