

TITLE	POLICY NUMBER	
Vital Records Requests	DCS 02-43	
RESPONSIBLE AREA	EFFECTIVE DATE	REVISION
Business Operations	10/02/2018	7

I. POLICY STATEMENT

The Department of Child Safety (DCS) is committed to maintaining effective use of client vital records, which include Social Security numbers/cards, and birth/death certificates. This policy ensures the proper management of vital records use in the field including current practices for requesting, maintaining, and safeguarding records.

II. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all DCS employees who work with vital records and provide guidance to clients requesting vital records.

III. AUTHORITY

A.R.S. § 41-151.12	Records; records management; powers and duties of director; fees; records services fund
A.R.S. § 41-151.13	Records management officer; duties
A.R.S. § 41-151.15	Preservation of public records
A.R.S. § 8-514.06	Child Welfare and Placement
SSA / RM 10205.025	Proper Applicant for a Social Security Card

[SSA / RM 10205.050](#)

Proper Applicant is a State Agency with Legal Custody

IV. DEFINITIONS

Centralized Records Coordination Unit (CRCU): The unit responsible for redacting or coordinating the redaction of DCS information as prescribed by law and for providing redacted records to the individuals who request them in accordance with DCS procedures.

DCS Distribution Center: The centralized facility where DCS records are stored, retrieved, and eventually destroyed.

Department or DCS: The Arizona Department of Child Safety.

DCS Vital Records Team: The unit that processes requests from DCS Staff for birth certificates, death certificates, Social Security number verifications, and Social Security cards. These include in-state, out-of-state, and out-of-country document requests, and involve working with the Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS), the Social Security Administration (SSA), and various other entities within and outside the United States.

Records: All books, paper, e-mails, maps, photographs or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, including prints or copies of such items produced or reproduced on film or electronic media pursuant to A.R.S. § 41-151.16, made or received by any governmental agency in pursuance of law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by the agency or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the government, or because of the informational and historical value of the data contained therein, and includes records that are made confidential by statute. Library or museum material made or acquired solely for reference or exhibition purposes, extra copies of records preserved only for convenience of reference and stocks of publications or records intended for sale or distribution to interested persons are not included within the definition of records. All records media are included in this definition, from traditional paper forms to electronic types (e.g., e-mail, social media), as well as forms of records not yet invented.

Vital Record: A Social Security card, birth certificate, or death certificate.

V. POLICY

- A. DCS shall request a birth certificate for a child who is in the legal custody of the Department and who is placed in out-of-home care within 30 days of the child's placement. Birth certificates will be requested in the following order:
1. from the parent/guardian;
 2. from a previously closed record;
 3. from the Office of the Attorney General during the process of filing a dependency petition. These records are **for government use only**, shall be printed and filed in the hard copy case record, and **may not be disseminated outside of DCS** for use by any party;
 4. from the DCS Vital Records Team when a child's place of birth was in Arizona, another state in the United States, or in another country.
- B. DCS will properly maintain all vital records obtained.
1. Records in the possession of DCS may not be altered in any way. This includes writing on, hole-punching, stapling, and any other act that alters, damages, or destroys the document.
 2. Vital records will be retained consistent with the guidelines provided in the *Records Management* ([DCS 02-24](#)) policy.
 3. Original records that are used as part of an application process for tribal enrollment may be released to the receiving tribe for children in the custody of the Department. Once the vital records are received, tribes assume retention responsibility and are not required to return the records to DCS.
- C. All vital records obtained by DCS will be properly secured when not in use to ensure the protection of confidential data and to minimize the number of duplicate documents requested for an individual child.
1. Children/youth must be in the State's legal custody in order to submit a request for new or additional copies of vital records. If a copy of the birth

certificate is already in a case file from a previous request, an additional request for a birth certificate shall not be submitted.

2. A request to have a vital record retrieved from a closed case file may be submitted by completing form [DCS 1120A - Records Storage Requests](#).
3. No more than one request for an Arizona birth certificate may be submitted to DHS each year; additional requests may be denied by DHS.
4. Requests for duplicate Social Security cards will be scrutinized to minimize the number of cards requested during the time a child is in care. The SSA has a lifetime limit of 10 cards per person. Requests for Social Security Cards that have been lost or stolen must be accompanied by an Unusual Incident Report as outlined in the *Unusual Incident Reporting (DCS 02-12)* policy.
5. Records obtained by an out-of-home caregiver should be part of the child's placement packet, follow the child throughout their time in out-of-home care, and be considered part of the child's belongings. If needed, a court order may be obtained to have the documents returned to either DCS or the child directly.

D. The DCS Vital Records Team will manage all requests for client vital records.

1. Only DCS Vital Records Team members are permitted to request vital records *directly* from DHS, other state entities, or the SSA on behalf of the Department. DCS Specialists will work with the DCS Vital Records Team to obtain the vital record.
2. Foster/kinship parents and group homes may request birth certificates on behalf of children from DCS, or if the child is 16 years of age or older, from DHS directly, by verifying placement with the *Notice to Providers (CSO-1035A)*.
3. When a request for records is received, the DCS Vital Records Team may request additional information from the requestor about the location of any records that were previously obtained. If the record was released due to a case closure, a new request may be made.

4. The DCS Vital Records Team may reject a request for any of the following reasons:
 - a. the request is incomplete;
 - b. the justification for the request does not meet existing policy;
 - c. a duplicate request has previously been submitted;
 - d. appropriate documentation to support the request is not provided;
or
 - e. the child who is the subject of a request is not in the legal custody of the Department. The child must be a ward of the court.

5. Requests for vital records must be submitted in a timely manner because they may take up to 180 days to complete. Process timelines will vary based on the request type and will be communicated by the DCS Vital Records Team at the time of submission:

Type of Request	Average Time to Complete Request (provided necessary documentation accompanies request)
In-State Birth Certificate	2 weeks
Out-of-State Birth Certificate	30 to 90 days
Out-of-Country Birth Certificate	180 days
Social Security Number Verification	30 to 60 days
Social Security Card	30 to 60 days

****These are estimated timeframes; actual timeframes may vary by request****

- E. DCS Specialists will request amendments to Arizona birth certificates directly to DHS. The DCS Vital Records Team does not handle these requests. In these instances, DHS may provide the amended record directly to the DCS Specialist.

- F. Child's Birth Not Registered (In State or Out-of-State)
 1. In-State Birth

When a child's birth has not been registered with the Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS), there is a two-step process required by DHS in

order to register the child's birth. The process is determined by the age of the child:

- Late Registration = less than one year old
- Delayed Birth = one year or older

After the Field Staff has submitted the birth certificate request to the DCS Vital Records Team (VR) and the child's birth record was not located in DHS' EBRS system, VR will submit a birth certificate request to DHS informing them that the child's record was not located. If DHS is also unable to locate the child's record, they will stamp 'No Record' on the request and return the request along with instructions to VR. Vital Records will provide the stamped request and the instructions to the Field, who will then follow the instructions according to where the child was born (e.g. hospital, home, etc.). *Note: Vital Records will close out the birth certificate request at this time.*

Once the instructions have been followed by the Field, at which point the child should be registered, the Field will submit a second request for a birth certificate (along with the stamped request form) to VR. Vital Records will review the second request to ensure the child has been registered. If the child does not appear to be registered and is now one year or older, VR will submit a request to DHS for a No Record Packet. Once the packet is received, VR will provide it to the Field who will then review and provide all required documentation regarding the child's birth (including a copy of their DCS ID badge) to DHS. Upon receipt, DHS will review and process the request, which can take up to 30 days. *Note: Vital Records will close out the birth certificate request at this time*

Please Note: The Field will work directly with DHS to register the child; this process does not involve the DCS Vital Records Team. Additionally, there is no fee for this service as DCS is an approved government agency.

2. Out-of-State Birth

The DCS Vital Records Team will work directly with the other state to register the child and obtain the birth certificate.

- G. Requests for additional vital records, including a certified birth certificate, may only be made for the qualifying reasons summarized in the chart on the following page:

VITAL RECORD REQUEST REASONS			
Reason	Social Security		Birth Certificate (Certified) NW – No Watermark W - Watermark
	Number	Card	
Tribal Enrollment		X	NW
YAP / ILP		X	NW
Case File Retention (copy - non-certified)			W
First Time Request / New Born		X	
Prison Visit		X	W
ICPC * (AZ = copy; Out of State = original)		X	W
Identification (State ID, Driver's License)		X	W
Passport		X	NW
Adoption	X		W
Tax Purposes (Foster Care Tax Credit)	X		W
School Registration (including daycare and preschool)		X	W
Section 8 Housing		X	W

* May change, depending on State

VI. PROCEDURES

A. Roles and Responsibilities

Office of the Attorney General

1. When children enter DCS custody, the AG's office will provide a copy of the child's government birth certificate.
2. The AG's office will not produce birth certificates for out-of-state children or duplicate copies of birth certificates.

DCS Specialists

DCS Specialists work with the DCS Vital Records Team to receive records and then safeguard records once they are in the case file by doing the following:

1. researching and providing information to the DCS Vital Records Team about children born out-of-state;
2. coordinating requests from children, parents, and caregivers to provide access to records in the case file; and
3. requesting new records that may not exist, or need replacement, in the case file.

DCS Vital Records Team

The DCS Vital Records Team will:

1. produce replacement copies from DHS (requires justification from DCS Specialist if request is within one year of receiving the previous certificate), certified copies, and out-of-state copies of birth certificates;
2. process all requests for Social Security cards and number verifications;

3. provide technical assistance to DCS Specialists on the procedures to obtain a birth certificate, death certificate and/or Social Security cards or numbers for children who are not in the legal custody of the Department; and
4. communicate with DCS Specialists about the status of requests or location of vital records, in instances of multiple requests.

B. Requesting a New Vital Record

1. The requestor must first verify that no vital records exist in the hard file and that no records are obtainable from the parents or group home.
2. The requestor will submit the *Birth/Death Certificate Request Form* ([CSO-1343A](#)) and/or *Social Security Request Form* ([CSO-1342A](#)) to the DCS Vital Records Team by following the directions on the form.
3. Once the form is received, the DCS Vital Records Team will either process or reject the request. The process times vary by request type as indicated in the chart in section D.5 of the Policy section.
 - a. Before processing the request, the DCS Vital Records Team will determine if a pending request already exists, and if so they will provide the status of that request.
 - b. If a vital record request has already been completed, the DCS Vital Records Team will provide the distribution date and name of the employee to whom the record was provided.

C. Corrections and Amendments to Arizona Birth Certificates

DCS Specialists may request changes to an Arizona birth certificate by working directly with DHS. Information on Corrections and Amendments to birth certifications can be found at the [DHS website](#) or by calling (602) 364-2428. To submit a government agency request for correction or amendment to a birth certificate, DCS Specialists will do the following:

1. complete a [government agency request form](#);

2. complete an [Affidavit to Correct or Amend a Birth Certificate](#). The child's original information must be entered in the "As The Record Reads Now" fields and the child's new information must be entered in the "Correction/Amendment Desired" fields;
3. sign the Application and Affidavit as the child's custodian; attach a copy of their DCS badge and an order from the court stating that the child is in State custody;
4. mail the completed documentation to the Bureau Office of Vital Records at the following address:

Bureau Office of Vital Records,
P.O. Box 6018,
Phoenix, AZ 85005

D. Requests for Birth Certificates in Preparation for Adoption Finalization

In order to ensure a certified birth certificate is obtained prior to the finalization of an adoption, DCS Vital Records will assist the DCS Specialist and the Arizona Attorney General's office in the process. DCS Policy [Chapter 4, Section 6 \(Placing Children in Out-of-Home Care\)](#) requires the Department to request a birth certificate for a child who is in the custody of the Department and in out-of-home care, unless the child is returned to the custody of the child's parent within that 30-day period. However, to help ensure that a certified copy of a child or youth's birth certificate is available when preparing for permanency through adoption, the DCS Office of Vital Records has implemented additional procedures.

The Arizona Attorney General's Office will:

1. upon notice of filing a motion for termination of parental rights, send the motion via encrypted email to DCS Vital Records at birthcertificates@azdcs.gov.
2. include the name of the currently assigned DCS Specialist in the email.

The DCS Office of Vital Records (OVR) will:

1. review the Vital Records inbox daily and review any motions for termination of parental rights or requests from the AAG for a birth

certificate;

2. review the OVR database to determine whether a prior request for a certified birth certificate had been made previously and whether it was obtained;
3. notify the current DCS Specialist and AAG when a prior request has been made;
4. when a prior request has not been made, email the DCS Specialist (copying the AAG) a copy of the *Birth/Death Certificate Request Form (CSO-1343A)* and instruct the Specialist to complete and return the form to initiate the request for a birth certificate;
5. upon successful completion of the [CSO-1343A](#), submit the request to DHS or the appropriate out-of-state agency;
6. upon receipt of the certified birth certificate, email the AAG and DCS Specialist;
7. send the original certificate to the assigned Field Coordinator who will provide to the DCS Specialist and AAG for finalization of the adoption;
8. scan a copy to OnBase and upload to Guardian;
9. send a second email reminding the Specialist to submit the request when the DCS Specialist does not respond to the initial email instructions to request a birth certificate within one calendar week; and
10. close out the matter if the DCS Specialist does not respond to the second email within one calendar week.

The DCS Specialist will:

1. respond and submit the *Birth/Death Certificate Request Form (CSO-1343A)* within one week to the OVR;
2. notify the OVR if they do not have a copy and/or require a copy of the birth certificate originally received when the OVR finds a prior request has been made; and

3. provide the AAG the birth certificate as may be required for completion of the adoption.

E. Requests for Birth Certificates in Preparation for Transition to Adulthood

In order to ensure a certified birth certificate and social security card are obtained prior to a youth reaching the age of majority, DCS Vital Records will assist the DCS Specialist in the process. DCS Policy [Chapter 5, Section 31 \(Services and Supports to Prepare Youth for Adulthood\)](#) requires the Department to provide or make arrangements for youth age 16 and older to receive a certified copy of their birth certificate and a social security card as outlined in this policy. However, to help ensure that a certified copy of a youth's birth certificate and social security card are available when preparing for adulthood, the DCS Office of Vital Records has implemented additional procedures.

The DCS Office of Vital Records (OVR) will:

1. review the Vital Records inbox daily for any requests for birth certificates and social security cards;
2. run a monthly Advanced Find report from Guardian for any youth nearing the age of majority in the next six months;
3. review the OVR database to determine whether a prior request for an original birth certificate and social security card have been made previously and whether those were obtained for any youth on the Advanced Find report;
4. when a prior request has not been made, email the DCS Specialist the *Birth/Death Certificate Request Form (CSO-1343A)* and *Social Security Request Form (CSO-1342A)* asking the Specialist to complete and return the forms to initiate the request for a birth certificate and social security card;
5. review Guardian to identify all information required for the [CSO-1343A](#) and [CSO-1342A](#);
6. request any information not available in Guardian but still required for completion of the request;

7. upon successful completion of the [CSO-1343A](#), submit the request to DHS or the appropriate out-of-state agency;
8. upon successful completion of the [CSO-1342A](#). submit the request to Social Security Administration;
9. send the original birth certificate and social security card to the assigned Field Coordinator who will provide to the DCS Specialist;
10. scan a copy of the birth certificate to OnBase and upload to Guardian;
11. send a second email reminding the Specialist to submit the request when the DCS Specialist does not respond to the initial email instructions to request a birth certificate and social security card within one calendar week; and
12. close out the matter if the DCS Specialist does not respond to the second email within one calendar week.

The DCS Specialist will:

1. respond and submit the *Birth/Death Certificate Request Form* ([CSO-1343A](#)) and *Social Security Request Form* ([CSO-1342A](#)) within one week to the OVR;
2. notify the OVR if they do not have a copy and/or require a copy of the birth certificate originally received when the OVR finds a prior request has been made; and
3. provide the youth the birth certificate and social security card as may be required for their transition to adulthood.

VII. FORMS INDEX

Birth/Death Certificate Request Form ([CSO-1343A](#))
DCS Records Storage Request ([DCS-1120A](#))
Social Security Request Form ([CSO-1342A](#))