

## Getting a Legal Name Change in Michigan

### Conditions:

1. Must be a resident of a county in Michigan for at least 1 year.
  - a. This will be the county listed on your current ID or license.
  - b. You must file in this county, even if you do not currently reside there.
2. The petition must not be made with fraudulent intent.
  - a. The reason for the name change must be explained on the form.

### Estimated Cost Breakdown (all fees may vary slightly by county):

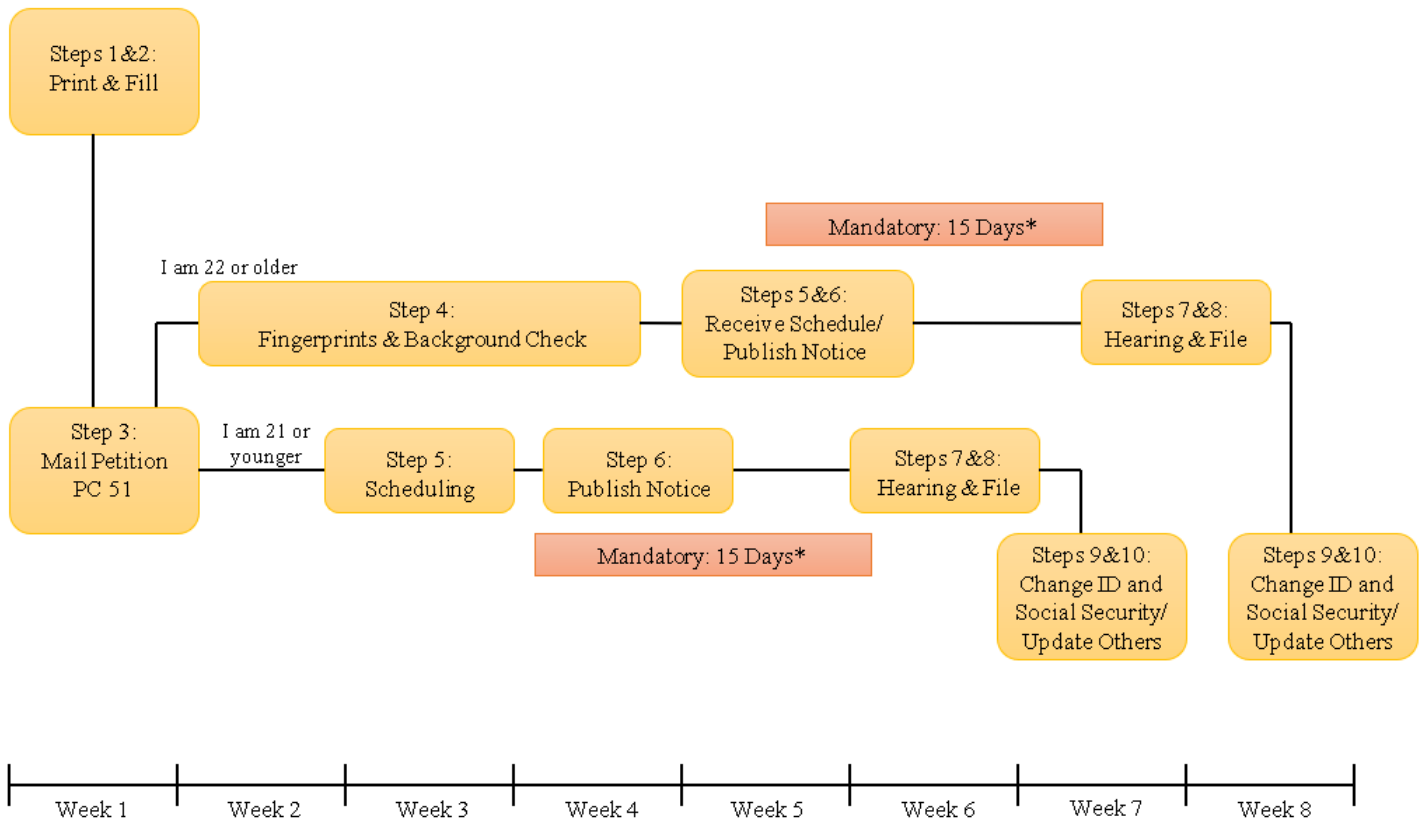
- ~\$175 Initial filing fee
- ~\$25-50 Individual county processing fees (not always applicable)
- ~\$60 Newspaper publishing fee
- ~\$30 Fee for filing the order and two certified copies of the petition following the hearing
  - Pro-Tips:
    - Get at least two certified copies. Some agencies require an original copy of the order to keep or borrow for up to 6 weeks. If you have two copies, you always have one for safe keeping.
    - You can always get more certified copies in the future at the county clerk's office for a fee.
- ~\$10 New State ID or Driver's License

### Estimated Timeline:

- ~ 1 week: Obtaining and mailing the PETITION TO CHANGE NAME PC 51 form, standard USPS mail.
- ~ 3-5 weeks: Obtaining a criminal background check.
  - Only for those age 22 years and older.
- ~ 2-8 weeks: Receive hearing information from the clerk, hearing scheduled.
- ~ 1-3 days: Publishing the notice of hearing in the newspaper (do this asap after you receive your hearing date)
- ~ 3-4 weeks: Receive new ID in the mail after visiting the Secretary of State.

➤ *Total time from filing date to hearing date varies. Average will be 4-8 weeks.*

## General Timeline for Legal Name Change in Michigan



\*The Notice of Hearing must be published no less than 15 days prior to the scheduled hearing date. See Step 6 for more details.

## Steps:

1. Download and print the form: PETITION TO CHANGE NAME PC 51.
  - a. Check your county clerk's website or go to [www.michiganlegalhelp.org](http://www.michiganlegalhelp.org) to download and print the form.
    - i. Michigan Legal Help offers a walkthrough that fills out the form for you based on your answers to questions.
  - b. Make sure you fill out all portions.
    - i. If you also have a Michigan Birth Certificate, you can complete that change at the same time via line 9 on the PETITION TO CHANGE NAME PC 51 form. If you do not have a Michigan Birth Certificate, you will have to contact the issuing state after your order is approved by a judge to change the name on your Birth Certificate.
  - c. Be sure to put your permanent address (as listed on your current ID) on the form. You can provide the clerk with a temporary mailing address if needed (you will provide them with a self addressed envelope in Step 2), but the form can't be processed unless the current permanent address is listed.
  
2. Find your county clerk's office or mailing address.
  - a. Each county can have a different filing and processing fee, but it is usually around \$175.
    - i. If you cannot afford this fee, you may qualify for a fee waiver.
      1. Doing this will add more time to the process because you will need to wait for a decision on the fee waiver before you can file your PETITION TO CHANGE NAME PC 51.
      2. These are the steps to apply for a fee waiver
        - a. You can use this website to have your fee waiver auto-filled: <https://michiganlegalhelp.org/self-help-tools/miscellaneous/do-it-yourself-fee-waiver>
        - b. If you wish to fill out the form on your own, you will need to go to <https://courts.michigan.gov/Administration/SCAO/Forms/courtforms/mc20.pdf> to print and fill out the form WAIVER/SUSPENSION OF FEES AND COSTS (AFFIDAVIT AND ORDER) MC 20.
          - i. Because of the nature of this form, it must be signed under oath in front of a notary public or a clerk of the court. Many financial or educational institutions have employees that can offer notary services, but there may be a small fee. Be sure to

bring your current Photo ID when you sign the document.

- b. If you need to mail a payment, call the office and verify the cost and information. Many offices will not accept personal checks but will accept a money order.
    - i. You can get a money order from your bank, credit union, and Western Union (available in many stores such as Meijer, Family Fare, and Walgreens). Search online or call to find the one closest and most convenient for you. Issuers often charge a small fee to prepare the money order.
  - c. Pro-Tips:
    - i. When mailing your petition, pay for delivery confirmation. This will give you a tracking number for your mailed documents, so you will know when they have been delivered. You can do this at the post office when you mail the document or purchase one online and print the label to tape on your letter.
      1. This costs about 5 dollars, but it was worth it when my letter got misdirected.
    - ii. Some websites are unclear on this point, but do not send the petition to the court itself.
      1. Generally, you will send the petition to the County Clerk's office.
    - iii. Make 1-2 copies of the petition and submit the original with your petition.
3. Mail (as described above) or drop off your petition, the proper amount of payment, a copy of your Birth Certificate (in-state or out-of-state accepted) and current ID (these do not need to be certified copies), and a self-addressed envelope with a stamp.
    - a. They will use the envelope you provide to send you information. Be sure the address you use is current and valid. You MUST send them this envelope.
  4. Criminal Background Check (*if you are less than 22 years old, skip this step*)
    - a. All persons 22 years and older require a criminal background check before a hearing can be scheduled.
    - b. You will need to be fingerprinted at a local police agency (cost varies).
      - i. Search online or ask the clerk to find your closest fingerprinting agency.
    - c. Mail your fingerprints, a copy of the petition you sent to the clerk, and a form of payment to the state police.
      - i. Check the fee amount and address before you send in your information via [www.michigan.gov/msp](http://www.michigan.gov/msp).

- d. The state police will report its findings to the county in which you filed the petition.
    - i. This usually takes 3-5 weeks.
    - ii. If you have no pending charges or criminal record, the state police will destroy your fingerprints after they report to the court.
5. Schedule the Hearing
- a. The county clerk will use the self-addressed stamped envelope you provided to send you information (after you pass the criminal record check, if applicable) regarding your hearing.
    - i. Some courts schedule the hearing date for you while others require you to call and schedule yourself. If you are unsure of your date, ask the clerk's office or search your county's court docket.
  - b. Pro-Tip:
    - i. If you are under 22 years old and do not receive your hearing information within 2 weeks, call the county clerk. Make sure they understand that they do not have to wait for background check results because your age waives that requirement.
6. Publishing the Notice of Hearing
- a. All name change hearings must be published in a local newspaper no more than 8 weeks and no less than 15 days prior to the hearing.
    - i. "Local" refers to the county in which you filed the petition.
      - 1. The clerk should be able to provide a list of acceptable papers.
    - ii. Pro-Tip:
      - 1. This was confusing. The notice only needs to be published for one day, as long as it is at least 15 days before the hearing.
      - 2. Usually, the newspaper will fill out a proof of publication form and send it to you or the court, but it is your responsibility to make sure the court receives proof of publication BEFORE the day of your hearing.
  - b. Each local newspaper will have a different publishing fee.
  - c. If there is a reason you do not feel safe publishing the notice, you can ask the court to keep the proceedings confidential; however, the judge will only do this if publishing will put you in physical danger. This request must be made early on in the process for review. Many courts will cancel your hearing date if your proof of publication is not received by the due date.

## 7. Attend the Hearing

- a. Arrive on the day of your hearing with the following:
  - i. A copy of the petition you submitted
  - ii. A current ID and a form of payment to obtain certified copies (check with the court for accepted forms of payments, some may accept credit card, check, or money order)
  - iii. Birth Certificate and proof of current residence. Proof of residence is not always required but may be requested. This can include drivers license or other ID and may include items from column 4 of this Secretary of State resource under "Proof of Michigan Residency"  
[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/sos/Applying\\_for\\_lic\\_or\\_ID\\_SOS\\_428\\_222146\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/sos/Applying_for_lic_or_ID_SOS_428_222146_7.pdf)
  - iv. Print and bring with you the ORDER FOLLOWING HEARING ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME PC 52
    1. This document is included in the toolkit found at [www.michiganlegalhelp.org](http://www.michiganlegalhelp.org)
    2. You NEED to bring this document to the hearing because this is what the judge signs.
- b. The judge will ask you questions such as:
  - i. Do you have a criminal record?
  - ii. Are you making this request with fraudulent intent?
  - iii. Why do you want to change your name?
  - iv. Do you have any debt?
    1. If you have student loans, you must update the creditor as soon as you obtain a new Social Security Card.
- c. Pro-Tip
  - i. This is the scariest part. Be polite and sure when answering questions.
  - ii. Listen carefully for any instructions the judge or bailiff gives you. If you need to, bring a pen and paper to write down important details.
  - iii. If you need an accommodation to attend your hearing, contact the court clerk before the day of your hearing.

## 8. File the Order

- a. The court will do this after the judge approves your name change.
  - i. Listen to the directions given by the judge, the location of this step varies.
  - ii. This can usually be done the same day of your hearing.
- b. The court will certify the ORDER FOLLOWING HEARING ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME PC 52 and will charge for each certified copy and a filing fee.

## 9. Changing your State ID or Driver's License

- a. You must obtain a new Social Security Card before you can change your State ID. This is free. You will need to go to the Social Security (SS) Office. Check <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp> to find the one nearest to you.
  - i. The SS office will require:
    1. A certified copy of the ORDER FOLLOWING HEARING ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME PC 52.
    2. Your current Social Security Card.
    3. Your current State ID or Driver's License.
    4. Your Birth Certificate (not required but very helpful).
  - ii. Pro-Tip:
    1. Once you file for a new Social Security Card, you can proceed to get your new State ID or Driver's License after 24-48 hours. You do not have to wait for the new card to come in the mail. Ask the employee at the SS office for a more exact waiting time.
    2. If they don't give it to you, ask for a signed receipt that shows you have applied for a new Social Security Card.
- b. To update your State ID or Driver's License at the Secretary of State, you will need:
  - i. Your current State ID or Driver's License
  - ii. A certified copy of the ORDER FOLLOWING HEARING ON PETITION TO CHANGE NAME PC 52
  - iii. A form of payment
  - iv. Birth Certificate or U.S. Passport
    1. This is a recent update used to verify U.S. Citizenship used for some applications. You may or may not be asked for these documents.
  - v. It is also helpful to bring the processing receipt you will get from the Social Security Office.

## 10. Update your Name

- a. Visit [www.dmv.org/articles/checklist-where-to-change-your-name/](http://www.dmv.org/articles/checklist-where-to-change-your-name/) to view a list of places that may have your name.
  - i. This article is targeted for those who have recently married, but the list of agencies will not vary much.
- b. Special considerations for students:
  - i. University Registrar
  - ii. Student Employee Records
  - iii. Student Loan Agency

- iv. High School or Transfer Transcripts
- v. Student ID, Online materials, Email\*
  - 1. This can be done at GVSU at any point without a legal name change. Visit [www.gvsu.edu/lgbtrc/preferred-or-use-name-208.htm](http://www.gvsu.edu/lgbtrc/preferred-or-use-name-208.htm) for detailed steps.
- vi. FAFSA/Renewable Scholarships
  - 1. Fill out the next FAFSA with the name attached to your Social Security Number, if you have completed Step 9(a) this will be your new legal name.
  - 2. Submit your FAFSA early, you will need time to provide them with extra documentation of the name change if asked.
  - 3. Contact any scholarship agency that may be sending checks on your behalf to the University.