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NAME CHANGE
PROGRAM

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**INSTRUCTIONS FOR NAME CHANGE
IN KENT COUNTY, MI**

~ Minors (ages 0-17) ~



The following set of instructions have been prepared for:

- **Minors (ages 0-17)**
- **Living in Kent County, MI, for at least 1 year**

If you are older than age 17: Do **not** use these instructions.
Ask Grand Rapids Trans Foundation for the correct instructions.

If you live outside Kent County: Do **not** use these instructions.
Other counties will have different instructions.

If you haven't lived in Kent County for at least 12 months:
Wait a full 12 months before submitting your paperwork to the Court.

Please remember:

- All forms must be typed or clearly **printed in black or blue ink**.
- All forms must be **printed single-sided**.
- Your case will be dismissed by the court if there are **90 days** of inactivity. Avoid this by staying on top of your next steps, to keep the process moving!
- The Court won't accept forms unless they are accurate, complete, and readable.
- Court personnel are not allowed to give you legal advice. If you have legal questions or are unable to properly complete these forms, seek assistance from a qualified attorney or a GRTF representative, respectively.
- Please reach out to GR Trans Foundation at <Update@GRTransFoundation.org> if you need assistance or have any questions or concerns. We're happy to help!
- If you need to contact the Court at any point: <ProbateCourt@KentCountyMI.gov>.

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SPONSORS



Step 1: Filing Paperwork

Payment:

- **Amount: \$187** (can sometimes be waived: see form MC 20 below). This amount includes one certified copy to be provided after your court hearing, and it is recommended that you add an **additional \$12** to this check to pay in advance for a second certified copy.
- **Methods:** Check, cashier's check, or money order (made payable to "Kent County Probate Court"). Credit card payments are accepted if you drop your paperwork off in-person at the Probate Court.

Things you need:

- Payment as listed above (unless waived).
- The documents listed below.
- A copy of the Minor's birth certificate.

Notes:

- Remember to either type or clearly print in black or blue ink.
- On the paperwork, "in the matter of" is referring to the Minor and "petitioner" is referring to the Parent/Guardian.

1. **Fill out the following paperwork.**

All forms can also be found here: <accesskent.com/Courts/Probate/namechange.htm>

- a. **[Fee Waiver Request \(MC 20\)](#)** - (OPTIONAL)
 - i. **This is based on income of the Parent/Guardian.**
 - ii. Waives the \$187 fee in some cases.
 - iii. Highly recommended if the Parent/Guardian receives government assistance (e.g. Food Stamps, WIC, Medicaid, SSI, HASA; does **not** include unemployment) or your gross household income is under 125% of federal poverty guidelines.
- b. **[Petition for Name Change \(PC 51\)](#)** or alternatively **[Petition for Name Change and Ex Parte Request for Nonpublication and Confidential Record \(PC 51-C\)](#)** if you are attempting to waive the publication requirement.
- c. **[Addendum to Protected Personal Identifying Information \(MC 97a\)](#)**
 - i. Only date of birth (DOB) is required in the table, not SSN.
- d. **[Publication of Notice of Hearing \(PC 50\)](#)**
 - i. Leave "Date and time" of hearing blank on this form.
 - ii. See box on following page for additional information.

Publication Requirement: One required step of the Name Change process is a publicly posted announcement in a local newspaper, which will include the Minor's deadname, their new chosen name, and their court date. (This step **no longer** publishes home address, phone number, or any contact info.)

If you'd like to attempt to waive this requirement, please review the section regarding Publication (page 7) prior to submitting any paperwork and be sure to fill out the correct petition: *Petition for Name Change and Ex Parte Request for Nonpublication and Confidential Record (PC 51-C)*.

ADDITIONAL NAME CHANGE REQUIREMENTS FOR MINORS

- **Child Support Payment History** – If both parents have not signed the Petition and the custodial parent filing the Petition claims that a support order has been entered and the noncustodial parent has failed to substantially comply with the support order for a period of two years or more before the filing of the Petition, then a Child Support Payment History must be obtained from the Friend of the Court and filed along with the Petition.
- **Non-Custodial Parent** - If the non-custodial parent of a minor for whom a name change is sought has not signed the consent portion of the Petition and if the address of the non-custodial parent:
 - **is not known**, then type or print the name of the non-custodial parent on the Publication form after the words: "TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS including"
 - **is known**, then along with your Petition, provide the Court with a **stamped envelope addressed to the non-custodial parent** with the return address shown as: Kent County Probate Court, 180 Ottawa NW, Suite 2500, Grand Rapids, MI 49503. The Court will use this to send copies of the Petition and Publication of Notice to the non-custodial parent.
Note: if this envelope is returned to the Court as undeliverable, you will be required to publish a second time for the non-custodial parent, which will cause you to incur **an additional publication fee** and may also result in delay of your hearing.

2. **Mail these documents (+ a copy of Minor's birth certificate) to Kent County Probate Court:**

Kent County Probate Court
180 Ottawa Ave NW, Suite 2500
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

3. **Within 1-2 weeks, the Probate Court will contact you directly via postal mail.**

- a. If you mailed in a check: they will send you an "approved" copy of your Petition (PC 51) with instructions about next steps.
- b. Alternatively, if you attempted to get your Petition Fee waived (via MC 20):
 - i. If \$187 fee was waived: they will send you an "approved" copy of your Petition (PC 51) with instructions about next steps.
 - ii. If \$187 Petition fee was **not** waived: the Court will request a check or money order for **\$187** (payable to "Kent County Probate Court"). Once that payment is processed, you'll receive an "approved" copy of your Petition (PC 51) with instructions about next steps.
- c. If you attempted to waive the publication requirement (via PC 51-C): they will notify you if your publication requirement has been waived or not when they send your "approved" Petition (PC 51-C) with instructions about next steps.

Step 2: Publication

What is this step?

- This is a published post in a newspaper, online and/or in print, to notify the public of your Name Change.
- This will include: noting it's a name change, the court date, your case number, your full deadname, and your full new chosen name. This post will **not** include any of your contact info. We've not had safety issues arise in the past related to publication, but this step may involve some risk.
- **Waiving Publication:** If you feel that the publication of this information could put you in danger, or if you'd like your court record and proceedings to be confidential, you can seek to waive this step. To do this, fill out a specific Petition, *Petition for Name Change and Ex Parte Request for Nonpublication and Confidential Record (PC 51-C)*, rather than the typical *Petition for Name Change (PC 51)*. However, please note that the Court generally denies any requests that are not an immediate safety risk (e.g. if you've been the victim of stalking, domestic violence, or an assaultive crime). Please consult an attorney or GRTF representative if interested.
- **If your Publication waiver is approved**, the court will classify your paperwork as "confidential." This means that they will send communications to *only you* via postal mail (or in-person with photo ID verification), they won't acknowledge your case over the phone/email, and they won't allow any guests at your court hearing.
- **If you do not qualify for a waiver**, you have two options for publication:
 - **GR Press (preferred option)** is higher traffic (online & in print), but considerably cheaper.
 - **GR Legal News** is lower traffic (online only), but considerably expensive.

Payment:

- Amount:
 - **GR Press:** currently **\$66.42** (subject to change).
 - **GR Legal News:** currently **\$114.40** (subject to change).
- Methods: Credit card (over the phone) for both GR Press and GR Legal News. Alternatively, you may coordinate to pay with a mailed check.

Things you need:

- Payment as listed above.

Notes:

- If your \$187 Petition Fee was waived via MC 20, the Court is responsible for paying your Publication fee on your behalf.

1. If publishing in GR Press:

- a. The Court will send you the Publication of Notice of Hearing (PC 50) document.
- b. It's your responsibility to email that document to <legalads@mlive.com>. In that email, ask them to publish it and ask about best methods for payment.
- c. They will generally email you back within 24-48 hours.
- d. Pay the bill ASAP. Failure to pay the fee and get published at least 14 days prior to your hearing will result in your court hearing being delayed.

2. If publishing in GR Legal News:

- a. The Court will send you the Publication of Notice of Hearing (PC 50) document.
- b. It's your responsibility to email that document to <outcountynotices@legalnews.com>. Include "Kent County" in the subject line. In that email, ask them to publish it in GR Legal News (Kent County) and ask about best methods for payment.
- c. Pay the bill ASAP. Failure to pay the fee and get published at least 14 days prior to your hearing will result in your court hearing being delayed.
- d. After publication if you have not received the affidavit of publication within 10 business days, send a request to <pubaffs@legalnews.com>.
- e. OPTIONAL: If you'd prefer to pay via check, call and ask for the bill's invoice number to include on your check's memo line. Then mail payment to:

GR Legal News
1430 Monroe Ave NW, Ste 140
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

Step 3: The Court Hearing

Payment:

- Amount: **N/A**.

Things you need:

- For a virtual hearing (default option): a computer/phone with a camera and Zoom functionality.
- For an in-person hearing (by special request): payment for certified copies, if necessary (see Step 4)

Notes:

- Name change hearings are typically held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 9:00 AM. These may vary.
- Plan to login or arrive 5-10 minutes early. These hearings start promptly and occur back-to-back. You may need to wait for as long as 30 minutes for your turn.
- Wear nice clothing. Do not wear a hat.
- **If the Minor is 14 years or older** at the time of the hearing, then the Minor must sign the [Minor's Consent to Name Change Form \(Form PC 51 B\)](https://www.accesskent.com/Courts/Probate/pdfs/pc51b.pdf) in the presence of the Court Register conducting the hearing.

- **Virtual Hearing (Preferred Method):**
 - You will receive communication from the Court with the details for your virtual hearing (via Zoom) about one month prior to your hearing date.
 - You may invite up to 10 guests to this virtual hearing.
 - The Court Register (who will conduct the proceedings) will swear you in and ask you a few questions. This is normal. Some examples include:
 - "Please state your current legal name for the record."
 - "Please state your new name moving forward for the record."
 - "What is your reason for seeking a name change?"
 - "Are you changing your name for fraudulent reasons, like avoiding creditors or law enforcement?"
 - "Have you paid the publication fee?"

- “Do you know of anyone that would oppose this name change?”
(This is again assessing for fraudulent intent, not upset family members. Say “no.”)
 - “Is there anything else you’d like the Court to know?”
 - **If this is a Minor who is 14 or older**, they’ll be asked to sign the Minor’s Consent to Name Change Form (PC 51 B) in the presence of the Court Register, and then mail that into the Kent County Probate Court before any official documents are mailed to the petitioner.
 - The entire hearing should take about 5 minutes.
- **In-person Hearing (ALTERNATIVE)**
 - If you decide on an in-person hearing, you must inform the Court in advance.
 - You may invite up to 10 guests to attend this hearing with you.
 - Arrive at the Kent County Courthouse (180 Ottawa Ave NW) in downtown Grand Rapids at least 10 minutes early. Going through a metal detector will be necessary; keep this in mind if you carry weapons or metal objects.
 - You should be informed ahead of time which courtroom you’ll be in. However, if you forget, you can visit the Probate Court counter at **Suite 2500** (2nd Floor) to double-check.
 - The Court Register (who will conduct the proceedings) will swear you in and ask you a few questions. This is normal. Some examples include:
 - “Please state your current legal name for the record.”
 - “Please state your new name moving forward for the record.”
 - “What is your reason for seeking a name change?”
 - “Are you changing your name for fraudulent reasons, like avoiding creditors or law enforcement?”
 - “Have you paid the publication fee?”
 - “Do you know of anyone that would oppose this name change?”
(This is again assessing for fraudulent intent, not upset family members. Say “no.”)
 - “Is there anything else you’d like the Court to know?”
 - **If this is a minor who is 14 or older**, they’ll be asked to sign the Minor’s Consent to Name Change Form (PC 51 B) in the presence of the Court Register.
 - The entire hearing should take about 5 minutes.

Step 4: Ordering Certified Copies

Payment:

- **Amount: \$12 per copy.**
- **Methods:** Check or money order (mail-in), or cash, check, money order, or credit card (in-person).

Things you need:

- Payment as listed above.
- Your “case number” (found on the upper right-hand corner of your “approved” Petition).

Notes:

- Certified copies will have a *raised seal*.
- We recommend ordering 2 certified copies.
- If you paid the \$187 Petition Fee, that comes with one free certified copy. We strongly recommend adding an additional \$12 at the front end to pre-pay for the second copy.
- However, if your Petition Fee was waived via MC 20, you’ll need to order certified copies separately, either by pre-paying \$24 at the front end, or using one of the two methods below after your hearing.

If ordering after your court hearing, pick only one method to do so:

1. Order In-Person at Kent County Courthouse:

- Visit the Kent County Courthouse. To enter the building, going through a metal detector will be necessary.
 - Take the elevator to the 2nd Floor. Go to the Probate Court desk. Once there, request certified copies from the clerk.
 - We recommend ordering 2 copies (\$12 each = \$24 total).
Cash, check, money order, and credit card are accepted.
 - Certified copies will be provided to you immediately.

2. Order via Mail (Preferred Method):

- Include a written or typed official request which includes your name, case number, and address you would like certified copies mailed to. See template on the next page.
- Payment via check or money order. We recommend ordering 2 copies (\$12 each, \$24 total).

- Include a self addressed, stamped envelope with your correct mailing address.
- Mail to:
 - Kent County Probate Court
 - 180 Ottawa Ave NW, Suite 2500
 - Grand Rapids, MI 49503
- Certified copies will be mailed to you within one week.

Template and Example of Request for Certified Copies Via Mail:

● Template:

Dear Kent County Probate Court,

I am seeking [NUMBER] certified copies for the following name change:

[FULL NEW NAME]
Case #: XX-XXXXXX-NC; XX-XXXXXX-NC

Please send copies to: [FULL MAILING ADDRESS]. I've included a self-addressed stamped envelope that can be used.

Thank you,

[FULL NEW NAME]
[PRONOUNS IF DESIRED]

● Example:

Dear Kent County Probate Court,

I am seeking 2 certified copies for the following name change:

John M. Doe
Case #: 12-345678-NC; 91-234567-NC

Please send copies to: 1234 Lake Michigan Blvd, Grand Rapids, MI 49503. I've included a self-addressed stamped envelope that can be used.

Thank you,

John M. Doe
they/he

Step 5: Updating Name Everywhere Else!

After receiving your certified copies, prioritize updating these two places first, in this order!

1. **Social Security Administration** (i.e. Social Security card)
2. **Secretary of State** (i.e. your drivers license or state ID)
3. **Then, everywhere else!**

Instruction Guide after your hearing.

On the day of your court hearing, GR Trans Foundation will email you a PDF Instruction Guide for navigating these systems:

- **Social Security** (name and gender marker)
- **Secretary of State** (name and gender marker)
- **MI Birth Certificate** (name and gender marker)
- **Passport** (name and gender marker)
- **Selective Service System** (for ages 18 to 25 only)
- **Credit Reporting Agencies**
- **A 5-page checklist** of places to update with your new name (e.g. school, work, insurance, bank, subscriptions, etc.)

If after reading the PDF document, you still need additional guidance or financial assistance with updating any of those legal documents, please apply for additional assistance here: tinyurl.com/GRTFLegalDocs. We're happy to help!

If you did not receive this PDF or have additional questions/concerns, please reach out!

**Don't hesitate to reach out if you need
advice, advocacy, or financial assistance:**

Update@GRTransFoundation.org

616-227-0129 (texting number)

Glossary One: Fees and Costs

FEES FOR NAME CHANGES FOR MINORS IN KENT COUNTY, MI

- **Filing Fee - \$187**
 - Can sometimes be waived using Form MC-20.
 - If unable to be waived, make check or money order payable to "Kent County Probate Court."
 - It is recommended that you add an **additional \$12** to this check to pay in advance for a second certified copy.
- **Publication Fee - GR Press currently \$66.42; GR Legal News currently \$114.40**
(subject to change)
 - Pay via credit card over the phone for both options. Alternatively, you can pay via check or money order payable to "GR Legal News" (include invoice number on the check's memo line).
 - If your \$187 Petition Fee was waived via MC 20, the Court is responsible for paying your Publication fee on your behalf.
 - This fee must be paid at least 14 days prior to the hearing.
- **Certified Copy of Order to Change Name - \$12 each**
 - We suggest obtaining at least 2 certified copies.
 - If you paid the \$187 Petition Fee at the front end, this amount includes one certified copy to be provided after your court hearing. We recommend adding an additional \$12 at the front end to pre-pay for the second copy.

We are happy to cover any and all costs, regardless of your financial situation. However, if you'd like to contribute towards your Name Change costs, this will allow GRTF to help a greater number of people each year.