



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

~ Adults (ages 18 and older) ~



The following set of instructions have been prepared for:

- **Adults (ages 18 and older)**
- **Living in Kent County, MI, for at least 1 year**

If you are age 18 or younger: 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>.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Step 1: Filing Paperwork	4
(Step 2: Your Court Hearing)	6
Step 3: Obtaining Certified Copies	8
Step 4: Updating Name Everywhere Else!	9

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**Mikita Kruse
Law Center**

Step 1: Filing Paperwork

Payment:

- **Amount: \$199.**
 - This includes the Petition fee of \$187 + an additional \$12 to pay for a 2nd certified copy in advance.
 - The \$187 fee can sometimes be waived. See form MC 20 below.
- **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.

Notes:

- Remember to either type or clearly print in black or blue ink.

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

All forms can also be found here: <www.kentcountymi.gov/1102/Name-Changes>

Request sample filled-out paperwork from update@grtransfoundation.org.

- **Fee Waiver Request (MC 20) - (OPTIONAL)**
 - i. Waives the \$187 fee in some cases.
 - ii. Highly recommended if you receive 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.
 - iii. If you are confident that this fee will be waived, send in a check for \$24 to pre-pay for two certified copies.
- Select one of the Petition Forms below:
 - i. **Petition for Name Change (PC 51)**
 - 1. Recommended option if you do *not* have a criminal history.
 - ii. **Petition for Name Change and Ex Parte Request for Nonpublication and Confidential Record (PC 51-C)**
 - 1. Recommended option if you *do* have a criminal history.
 - 2. This will waive the Publication requirement.
 - 3. This will also create a confidential record with the Court. In order to communicate any questions/concerns, you'll need to

visit the physical offices of the Kent County Probate Court and show ID.

- [Addendum to Protected Personal Identifying Information \(MC 97a\)](#)
 - i. Only date of birth (DOB) is required in the table, not SSN.

2. Mail these documents + payment to Kent County Probate Court:

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

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

- Approved paperwork: The Court will send you approved copies of your Petition, which will include your case numbers. We suggest keeping this paperwork for your records.
- Court Hearing OR Certified Copies:
 - i. If the Court has deemed that a court hearing is *unnecessary*, the judge will sign off on your name change and send you your certified copies immediately! Congrats, you're finished! (Proceed to Step 3 on page 8.)
 - ii. However, if the Court has deemed that a hearing is *necessary* (this may be the case if you have a criminal history), the Court will send you additional information about your court hearing. (Proceed to Step 2 on the next page.)

Important Updates!

As of April 1, 2025, amended MI law (MCL.711.1.amended,MCL.711.3.amended) has made the MI Name Change process much **quicker, cheaper, and safer.**

Improvements to the process:

- Fingerprinting and background checks are no longer required. However, the Court may internally use ICHAT to check or verify criminal history.
- Trans & Nonbinary petitioners can opt out of the Publication requirement. Using the PC-51c form, opting out of Publication for gender affirmation reasons is easy and creates a confidential record.
- Court hearings may not be required. It is now up to the judge's discretion whether a court hearing is necessary. In Kent County, a hearing may still be necessary if the petitioner has a criminal history.

***SKIP THIS STEP UNLESS THE COURT
INDICATES THAT IT IS NECESSARY.**

(Step 2: Your 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 6)

Notes:

- Name change hearings are typically held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 9:00 AM or 9:30 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.

- **Virtual Hearing (Preferred / Default 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."
 - "Are you changing your name for fraudulent reasons, like avoiding creditors or law enforcement?"
 - "What is your reason for seeking a name change?"
 - "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?"
 - The entire hearing should take between 2-5 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."
 - "Are you changing your name for fraudulent reasons, like avoiding creditors or law enforcement?"
 - "What is your reason for seeking a name change?"
 - "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?"
- The entire hearing should take between 2-5 minutes.

Step 3: Obtaining Certified Copies

Notes:

- **You have pre-paid for two certified copies** at the front end of this process, and the Court will automatically send them to you via postal mail after your name change is approved. They generally arrive in less than one week.
- Certified copies will have a *raised seal*.
- If you require additional certified copies in the future (due to losing or damaging your old ones), you may order more by visiting the Kent County Probate Court.
 - Cash, check, money order, and credit card are accepted.
 - These cost \$12 per copy.
 - Certified copies will be provided to you immediately.

Step 4: Updating Name Everywhere Else!

After the court has approved your name change,
please text us (616-227-0129) or email us
(update@grtransfoundation.org) to let us know!

Instruction Guide:

Once you notify us that your name change has been approved, GR Trans Foundation will email you a PDF Instruction Guide for navigating these systems:

- **Social Security** (name only)
- **Secretary of State** (name and gender marker)
- **MI Birth Certificate** (name and gender marker)
- **Passport** (name only)
- **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 you 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!

**Don't hesitate to reach out if you need
advice, advocacy, or financial assistance.
We are happy to cover any and all costs,
regardless of your financial situation.**

Update@GRTransFoundation.org

616-227-0129 (texting only)

616-719-1623 (calling only)