

STATE OF NEW YORK

4845

2017-2018 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

March 3, 2017

Introduced by Sen. LANZA -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Children and Families

AN ACT to amend the domestic relations law and the public health law, in relation to adoptee rights

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Legislative findings. The legislature hereby states its
2 intention to acknowledge, support and encourage the life-long health and
3 well-being of persons who have been and will be adopted in the state of
4 New York. The legislature further recognizes that the inability to
5 access accurate and complete medical and self-identifying data of any
6 adopted person may result in such person succumbing to preventable
7 disease, premature death or otherwise unhealthy life. As such, the
8 provisions of this act seek to establish considerations under the law
9 for adopted persons to access their birth information while providing
10 for the privacy of an adopted person and his or her birth and adoptive
11 families.

12 § 2. Subdivision 2 of section 114 of the domestic relations law, as
13 amended by chapter 559 of the laws of 1992 and as designated by chapter
14 601 of the laws of 1994, is amended to read as follows:

15 2. No person, including the attorney for the adoptive parents shall
16 disclose the surname of the child directly or indirectly to the adoptive
17 parents except upon order of the court. No person shall be allowed
18 access to such sealed records and order and any index thereof except
19 upon an order of a judge or surrogate of the court in which the order
20 was made or of a justice of the supreme court. [~~No~~] Except as provided
21 in subdivisions four and five of this section, no order for disclosure
22 or access and inspection shall be granted except on good cause shown and
23 on due notice to the adoptive parents and to such additional persons as
24 the court may direct. Nothing contained herein shall be deemed to
25 require the state commissioner of health or his or her designee to

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 secure a court order authorizing disclosure of information contained in
2 adoption or birth records requested pursuant to the authority of section
3 forty-one hundred thirty-eight-c or section forty-one hundred thirty-
4 eight-d of the public health law; upon the receipt of such request for
5 information, the court shall transmit the information authorized to be
6 released thereunder to the state commissioner of health or his or her
7 designee.

8 § 3. Section 114 of the domestic relations law is amended by adding a
9 new subdivision 5 to read as follows:

10 5. Notwithstanding any inconsistent provision of law: (a) an adopted
11 person who has attained the age of eighteen years may apply to the court
12 in which the order of adoption was made, or to the supreme court, to
13 request an order releasing a certified copy of his or her original long
14 form birth certificate, or where no birth certificate is available, the
15 identifying information of his or her birth parent or parents, in
16 accordance with this subdivision. Such application shall include suffi-
17 cient proof of identity of such adopted person.

18 (b) Upon receipt of an application pursuant to paragraph (a) of this
19 subdivision, the court shall provide the department of health, or order
20 that such department be provided, with the identifying information of
21 the adopted person's birth parent or parents and direct the department
22 of health to make a reasonable and good faith effort, documented in
23 writing and completed within one hundred twenty days, to notify the
24 birth parent or parents and advise such parent or parents that the
25 adopted person has made an application pursuant to this subdivision.
26 Such notification and advisory given shall comply with any terms and
27 conditions set forth by the court and shall be made by means designed to
28 be sensitive to the personal nature of the matter. Such notification
29 shall also include an advisory to such parent or parents about the
30 adoption medical information registry established by section forty-one
31 hundred thirty-eight-c of the public health law and the procedures by
32 which a birth parent may provide medical information to the registry.
33 The department of health shall, before making efforts to notify the
34 birth parent or parents, determine whether such parent or parents have
35 already filed a written confirmation with the court or the department of
36 health pursuant to paragraph (h) of this subdivision or a birth parent
37 registration consent form with the adoption information registry pursu-
38 ant to subdivision ten of section forty-one hundred thirty-eight-c of
39 the public health law. Where such confirmation or consent form is on
40 file, the department of health shall notify the court and no such
41 efforts to notify the parent shall be made.

42 (c) Upon notification pursuant to paragraph (b) of this subdivision,
43 or earlier at the discretion of the birth parent pursuant to paragraph
44 (h) of this subdivision, such birth parent may complete a written and
45 notarized confirmation that he or she wishes to maintain confidentiality
46 of identifying information, or that he or she consents to the release of
47 identifying information.

48 (d) Upon receipt of such written confirmation, or where the parent has
49 completed a birth parent registration consent form pursuant to subdivi-
50 sion ten of section forty-one hundred thirty-eight-c of the public
51 health law, the department of health shall notify the court and provide
52 the court with the written confirmation or consent form, as the case may
53 be, completed by the birth parent. Where such consent form has been
54 revoked by a birth parent, the department of health shall so notify the
55 court and such revocation shall be considered by the court as a request
56 for continued confidentiality of identifying information.

1 (i) If the birth parent consents to the release of identifying infor-
2 mation, the court shall (A) order the release of a certified copy of the
3 long-form birth certificate to the adopted person, or (B) when such
4 birth certificate is not available, order that the identifying informa-
5 tion be made available to the adopted person.

6 (ii) If the birth parent requests continued confidentiality, the court
7 shall direct the release of a certified copy of the birth certificate
8 with the identifying information regarding such parent redacted, and
9 shall provide such adopted person with such redacted copy and file a
10 copy of the redacted version in the court record. Such redacted copy
11 shall include non-identifying information as that term is defined in
12 subdivision three of section forty-one hundred thirty-eight-c of the
13 public health law.

14 (iii) Where there are two identified birth parents and only one such
15 parent has requested confidentiality, the identifying information
16 regarding the other parent may, in the discretion of the court, be
17 released to the adopted person in accordance with this subdivision. The
18 consent of one parent shall not be construed to be consent by the other
19 parent.

20 The court shall issue a written order when making a determination
21 pursuant to subparagraphs (ii) and (iii) of this paragraph.

22 (e) (i) If after reasonable and good faith efforts pursuant to para-
23 graph (a) of this subdivision, the birth parent is unable to be notified
24 or does not respond to such notification, the department of health shall
25 so notify the court. Unless the court, in its discretion, for good cause
26 specified in its order, determines that the release of such birth
27 certificate or identifying information would be clearly detrimental to
28 the welfare of the birth or adoptive parents, the court shall: (A)
29 release, or direct the release of, an unredacted, certified copy of the
30 long-form birth certificate to the adopted person, or (B) if such birth
31 certificate is not available, release or direct the release of the iden-
32 tifying information that would have appeared on the original long-form
33 birth certificate. For the purposes of this paragraph, good cause shall
34 include, but is not limited to, evidence concerning the wishes of the
35 birth parent regarding confidentiality as expressed at the time of the
36 adoption or surrender. The court shall issue a written order when making
37 a determination pursuant to this paragraph.

38 (ii) Where the court determines not to release an unredacted birth
39 certificate pursuant to subparagraph (i) of this paragraph, the court
40 shall direct the release of a certified copy of the birth certificate
41 with the identifying information regarding the birth parent or parents
42 redacted, and shall provide such adopted person with such redacted copy.

43 (f) Upon the consent of a birth parent to release identifying informa-
44 tion pursuant to this subdivision, the department of health shall
45 provide such parent with a contact preference form that shall, if
46 completed by the birth parent, accompany a copy of a birth certificate
47 or other identifying information provided to the adopted person under
48 this subdivision and be filed with the adoption information registry
49 established by section forty-one hundred thirty-eight-c of the public
50 health law. The contact preference form shall include the following
51 content to be completed at the option of the birth parent:

52 (i) I am willing to or would like to be contacted.

53 (ii) I would prefer to be contacted only through an intermediary.

54 (iii) I have completed a medical history form and have filed it with
55 the department of health.

1 (iv) Please do not contact me. If I decide later that I would like to
2 be contacted, I will submit an updated contact preference form to the
3 court or the department of health.

4 (v) Add any additional information here (if desired):

5 The medical history form shall be in a form prescribed by the depart-
6 ment of health and shall be supplied to the birth parent with a contact
7 preference form.

8 The medical history form and contact preference form are confidential
9 communications from the birth parent to the person named on the sealed
10 birth certificate and shall be placed in separate sealed envelopes upon
11 receipt from the birth parent.

12 The sealed envelopes containing the contact preference form and
13 medical history form shall be released to a person requesting his or her
14 birth certificate under this subdivision or his or her agent, such as
15 his or her attorney, with appropriate authorization. The contact pref-
16 erence form and medical history form are private communications from the
17 birth parent to the person named on the sealed birth certificate and no
18 copies of the forms shall be retained by the court.

19 (g) The department of health shall develop an affirmative information
20 campaign and widely disseminate to the public, through its website,
21 public service announcements and other means, in multiple languages and
22 through multiple outlets, information concerning the adoption informa-
23 tion registry established by section forty-one hundred thirty-eight-c of
24 the public health law and the provisions of this subdivision, including,
25 but not limited to, the means by which a birth parent may file a written
26 confirmation pursuant to paragraph (h) of this subdivision with the
27 court that ordered the adoption or the department of health that he or
28 she wishes to maintain the confidentiality of identifying information,
29 or consents to the release of such identifying information.

30 (h) A birth parent may, at any time, file a written and notarized
31 confirmation with the court that ordered the adoption or with the
32 department of health indicating that he or she wishes to maintain confi-
33 dentiality of identifying information or that he or she consents to the
34 release of identifying information. The department of health shall noti-
35 fy the court and provide the court with a copy of such written confirma-
36 tion. The court shall honor such written confirmation unless it is with-
37 drawn or modified, in notarized writing, by the birth parent.

38 (i) For the purposes of this subdivision, "adopted person" shall
39 include a person who was surrendered as described in subdivision seven
40 of section one hundred nine of this article.

41 § 4. Subdivision 10 of section 4138-c of the public health law, as
42 added by chapter 435 of the laws of 2008, is amended and a new subdivi-
43 sion 10-a is added to read as follows:

44 10. The commissioner is directed to develop an adoption information
45 registry birth parent registration consent form to be completed at the
46 time of surrender or consent to adoption. Such form shall include check-
47 off boxes to be appropriately marked by the biological parent or parents
48 whose consent is necessary for the relinquishment of such child indicat-
49 ing whether or not such parent consents to the receipt of identifying
50 information and a certified copy of the original birth certificate by
51 the child to be adopted. A copy of such form shall be sent to the
52 department with copies of the original and amended birth certificates.
53 Such form shall state that it is the responsibility of the birth parent
54 to update the registry with any changes in contact information. The form
55 shall additionally advise the biological parents of the adoption medical
56 information sub-registry and the procedures by which a birth parent may

1 provide medical information to the sub-registry. Notwithstanding any
2 inconsistent provision of law to the contrary, the commissioner is
3 directed to develop any rules and regulations necessary to expedite the
4 transfer of information from any agency, court or department necessary
5 to implement this subdivision.

6 10-a. Notwithstanding any inconsistent provision of law to the contra-
7 ry, for surrenders occurring and orders of adoptions entered after the
8 effective date of this subdivision, where the biological parent or
9 parents whose consent is necessary for the relinquishment of such child
10 consents to the release of a certified copy of the child's original
11 birth certificate or does not affirmatively request, on the form
12 described in subdivision ten of this section, that such original birth
13 certificate remain confidential, the surrendered or adopted person
14 shall, after attaining the age of eighteen and upon application to the
15 department and adequate proof of identity, have the right to receive a
16 certified copy of their original birth certificate.

17 § 5. This act shall take effect April 15, 2018, provided, however,
18 that paragraphs (g) and (h) of subdivision 5 of section 114 of the
19 domestic relations law, as added by section three of this act, shall
20 take effect on the thirtieth day after such effective date.