

In New York, you can change your name without going to court. This is called common usage. Changing your name by common usage is easy - just start using your new name. Your name will not be legally changed though and there will not be a public record of your new name.

Because you will not have proof of your name change, it may be hard, if not impossible, to get your name changed with certain agencies like DMV or Social Security Administration.

There are **two** ways to legally change your name.

① **Change your name as part of a court process, such as getting married or divorced.**

If you are getting married, there is a space for you to request the name change on your marriage license.

If you are getting divorced, you can change your name as part of the divorce proceedings.

There are other court proceedings where you can request a name change as part of the proceedings. You may want to check with an attorney or visit your local law library for more information.

② **Fill out and file the following forms to change your name.**

- *Name Change Petition*
- *Name Change Order*
- *Application for Index Number*
- *Request for Judicial Intervention*

You can find these forms and detailed instructions at your local law library or online at:
www.nycourts.gov/courts/6jd/forms/SRForms/index.shtml

Once your order is signed, you will need to publish your name change in the newspaper.

Do I have to publish my name change?

- Yes, in most cases. This is so creditors and other agencies can be aware of your name change.
- *But*. . . you may ask the court to not have to do this *IF* you feel that your personal safety, or the safety of your children, could be in danger by having your name change in the newspaper.

Are there names I cannot use?

Yes! You cannot:

- Change your name to a "trademarked" name like "IBM" to make money.
- Take the name of a famous person such as "Jon Bon Jovi" and then try to make money off your new name.
- Use symbols or pictures in your name like a dollar sign "\$", an asterisk "*" or a smiley face "☺".
- Use numbers in your name like "John2007". You *can* use Roman numerals at the end of your name, such as John Smith, II.
- Use offensive or violent words or a racial slur for your name.

What else should I know?

- You can get your birth certificate changed to show your new name. You need to send a certified copy of the name change order to the Department of Health to the state that issued your birth certificate.
- It is **your** responsibility to notify agencies of your name change. This includes DMV, Social Security Administration, schools, insurance companies, banks, credit card companies and anyone else that might need to update their records to show your name change.

More Questions?

You can go to your local law library. To find the one nearest you go to our website at:
www.nycourts.gov/courts/6jd/index.shtml