



How to register the birth of your child

Addressing YOUR questions about birth registration

The Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration is in the process of replacing the Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Act of 1963 with a new law that will be more appropriate to the needs of Namibia and more feasible to implement in practice. The Ministry will be engaging in public consultation around the law reform proposals, and hopes that this process will also raise the level of public awareness of the importance of registering all vital life events.

As part of this process, during the following months, the Ministry will be answering some of your questions about birth registration. This column will appear in The Namibian. You can also access the column on the MHA and LAC websites (www.mha.gov.na and www.lac.org.na). The answers are based on the 1963 law which is currently in force.

My child is 2 months old and he is not yet baptised. Can I still register him?

The child does not have to be baptised for you to register the child. You should take along the child's health passport instead. You should register your child immediately after birth rather than waiting for ceremonies such as baptism.

How much does it cost to change a child's surname?

As of 2013, the fee is N\$80 if the application is made by the parent or guardian of a child under the age of 21, and N\$220 if the application is made by a person aged 21 or older on his or her own behalf. There is no charge for changing the surname of a child born outside marriage from the mother's surname to the father's surname.

I have lost my child's birth certificate. What can I do?

You can apply for a copy of your child's birth certificate from the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration. It will cost you N\$12.

The father of my child and I were not married at the time our baby was born but we got married one year later. Can we change our son's birth certificate?

Yes the registration of birth can be changed to register the birth as if the parents had been legally married to each other when the child was born.

I am the father of my child. I live in a different town to the mother of my child. We would like to register our child in my surname. The mother says I can give her an affidavit to say that I am the father of the child and the child will then be registered in my surname. Is this true? If so how do I make an affidavit?

Yes, your son can have your surname provided that both you and the mother agree to this. You make an affidavit with the help of a Commissioner of Oaths. You can find a Commissioner of Oaths at police stations, banks and law offices.

To make an affidavit, you can write out the statement yourself, or you can ask the Commissioner to write down what you say. The Commissioner will ask you to swear that what you have said is true. Then you must sign the statement or make your mark on it while the Commissioner is watching. The Commissioner will then stamp the document to certify that it is a sworn statement. A statement made in this way is called an affidavit.

Send your suggestions for law reform or questions about how to register the birth of a child to 081 600 0098. We will select a few of the most common questions to respond to in this column, as space permits. If your question is not addressed in the column, you can contact your nearest Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration Office for assistance.

UNICEF and the Legal Assistance Centre are supporting the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration in this initiative

