

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About the Voluntary Adoption Registry and the Assisted Search Program

What is the Voluntary Adoption Registry (VAR)?

The VAR is a registry where eligible birth family members can consent to the release of identifying information.

When was the VAR established?

The VAR statutes were passed in Oregon in 1983 to assist adoptees, birth parents, birth siblings and a few other authorized persons to be in contact with each other.

Is a search conducted?

Not at this point. The Registry is passive. If both a birth relative and an adoptee register, they will be matched, and identifying information will be released to each of them.

What is identifying information?

Identifying information includes names, a current street address, telephone number, and email address, if available.

Who can obtain identifying information?

Identifying information can be obtained by:

- adult adoptee (age 18 or over)
- birth parent/s of an adoptee
- the putative father of an adoptee
- adult genetic sibling of adult adoptee
- adult adoptee genetic siblings who have been adopted by different families and have no knowledge of their birth parents

Who may search if the adoptee or birth parent has died?

Please contact the [Post Adoption Services](#) program.

If the adult adoptee has been adopted with a younger birth sibling, may he or she still search?

When birth siblings are adopted by the same family, both adoptees must be 18 before a search can be conducted.

How do I register with the VAR?

Complete the Affidavit for Identifying Information. Your signature on the affidavit must be notarized and returned with a copy of your birth certificate. You can find a link to the affidavit on the left.

Why do I have to follow these steps?

Oregon law mandates these steps.

If I register, to whom will you give my identifying information?

We will release your identifying information only to a birth family member and only after we have first checked with you, told you of the inquiry, and received your oral permission to release your identifying information.

Where can I get documents notarized?

Most banks offer notary services free of charge or at a very low cost.

Why do the documents need to be notarized?

When you sign the Affidavit or the Assisted Search Application, you are making a sworn statement. Only certain people in our society are legally qualified to issue oaths. A notary is one of them. A notary will also check your identification. He or she then also attests that you are the person who signed the document.

What is the fee for registration in the VAR?

There is no fee for this service.

How can I get a copy of my birth certificate, if I am an adoptee?

Please contact the Bureau of Vital Statistics in the state in which your adoption was finalized. You may do so through the following web site: <http://www.vitalrec.com/>. Most states permit you to order your birth certificate on-line.

Do all international adoptees have US birth certificates?

No, if your adoption was not finalized in the US or if the state your adoption was finalized in did not issue birth certificates to international adoptees at the time that you were legally adopted, you will not have a US birth certificate.

What do I do if I do not have a US birth certificate?

You may provide us with a substitute document. We can accept documents created by the US government or another national government, such as a Naturalization Certificate, a US passport, or a foreign birth certificate.

Do I need to renew my registration in the VAR?

No, your registration is permanent.

How do I cancel my registration in the VAR?

Simply inform us in writing that you wish to cancel your registration.

How will you know if I move?

It is your responsibility to notify us of any change of name or address.

How will I know if the adoptee or one of my birth family members registers?

We will contact you when a match has occurred.

Can I register at a later date?

Yes, you may register at any time.

What is the Assisted Search Program?

The Assisted Search Program, added by the Oregon legislature in 1993, allows confidential searches to be performed when a match does not occur through the VAR.

How can I request an Assisted Search?

You must fill out the Affidavit for Identifying Information and the Assisted Search Application, have your oath and your signature notarized on both documents, and return the completed documents with your birth certificate and the nonrefundable fee. You can find both documents in the menu on the left.

Why do I have to follow these steps?

Oregon law mandates these steps.

What other steps do you recommend when requesting a search?

We recommend that you write an introductory letter to the person you are searching for and that you include photos of yourself and your family.

Why do you make this recommendation?

People who are sought commonly have questions, such as “Why is s/he looking for me? What does s/he want from the relationship?” Your words about your search are helpful for the person being sought to understand you. Your letter and photos of yourself and your family also make the initial contact more personal. For further suggestions about writing your introductory letter please see “Introductory Letter and Photos” in the menu on the left.

What is the fee for a search?

The fee is \$400. It is nonrefundable.

Are scholarships available?

Yes. They are based on need. Please contact the [Post Adoption Services](#) program for an application.

In which countries can Holt offer an Assisted Search?

Because different countries have different laws and views regarding search, please contact the [Post Adoption Services](#) program at Holt International to find out if the Assisted Search Program is available to you.

How will I know the outcome of the search?

We will tell you either that:

- the person was found and intends to register in the VAR in order to release identifying information to you
- the person was found and is willing to exchange non-identifying information
- the person was found but does not want to make contact
- the person was not found

How will I receive identifying information?

We will notify you in a direct and confidential manner.

If I am contacted by the Assisted Search program, can I say “no” to contact?

Yes. The Assisted Search program was established to advise persons who are sought that they might release identifying information through the VAR, if they wish. **The release of identifying information is strictly voluntary.**

May I change my mind about releasing identifying information?

Yes. Even if you indicated interest initially in releasing identifying information by registering in the VAR and have received registration materials, there is still no obligation to register.

Will Holt contact me more than once?

Yes, if you accept registration materials and do not return them within 90 days, Oregon law requires us to re-contact you once regarding your intention to register. If you have changed your mind about registering, you may tell us at that point or you may write to us. If you write to us, we will not need to contact you a second time.

If I refuse to release identifying information, may I change my mind later?

You may reverse the decision not to register at any time.

What would you suggest if I am struggling with the aftermath of search, for example, the varied and sometimes challenging aspects of not being able to find a birth family member or my new relationship with my birth family or my relationship with my adoptive family?

Please do not hesitate to contact us. We are happy to discuss your concerns with you. We can recommend, as needed, books, web sites, adoptee groups, search support groups, and therapists skilled in adoption issues in your area. As a start, you will want to look at the Cultural Resources and the Search and Reunion Resources. You can find these documents in the menu on the left.

Where should I send my completed documents?

Please send your completed documents to

Post Adoption Services
 Holt International Children’s Services
 PO Box 2880
 Eugene, OR 97402