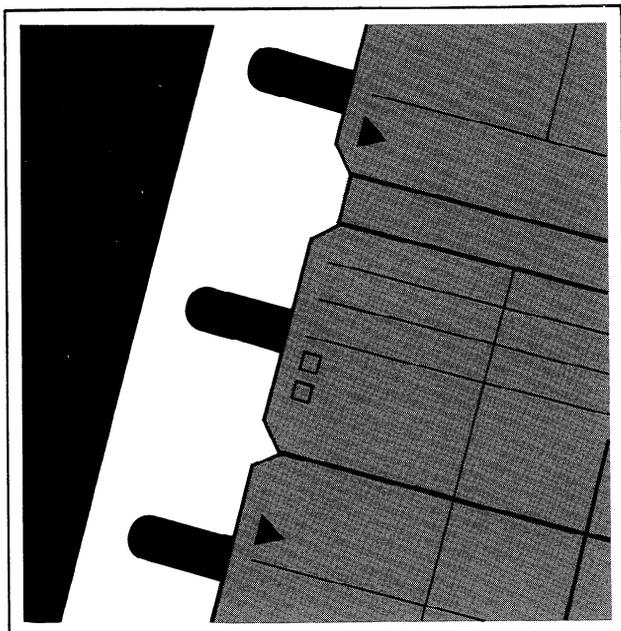


# Handbook on Divorce Registration



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Public Health Service  
Centers for Disease Control  
National Center for Health Statistics

Hyattsville, Maryland  
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# Preface

This handbook is prepared by the National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control, U.S. Public Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services, and contains instructions for persons with responsibilities for completing and filing certificates of divorce. It pertains to the 1989 revision of the U.S. Standard Certificate of Divorce, Dissolution of Marriage, or Annulment, and the 1977 revision of the Model State Vital Statistics Act and Regulations. This handbook is intended to serve as a model for adaptation by any vital statistics registration area.

Other handbooks available as references on preparing and registering vital records are:

- *Medical Examiners' and Coroners' Handbook on Death Registration and Fetal Death Reporting*
- *Physicians' Handbook on Medical Certification of Death*
- *Hospitals' and Physicians' Handbook on Birth Registration and Fetal Death Reporting*
- *Funeral Directors' Handbook on Death Registration and Fetal Death Reporting*
- *Guidelines for Reporting Occupation and Industry on Death Certificates*
- *Handbook on the Reporting of Induced Termination of Pregnancy*
- *Handbook on Marriage Registration*

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# Introduction

## Purpose

This handbook is designed as an aid to court officials, attorneys, and others who have responsibilities related to completing and filing records of divorce, dissolution of marriage, and annulment. It includes background information on the importance of these documents for legal and statistical purposes as well as instructions for recording specific entries. The term “divorce” as used in this handbook encompasses decrees of absolute divorce, marriage dissolution, and annulment but excludes various limited decrees, such as decrees of legal separation and divorces from bed and board.

## Importance of divorce registration

Registration of divorces in the United States provides documentary proof that a decree has been granted. Individuals are frequently faced with the need to prove that a particular divorce has been granted. For example, rights to remarry or receive pension, and questions related to inheritance, insurance, or other benefits, may depend upon official documentation of a divorce.

In all States, the basic documents pertaining to divorces are kept in the dockets of the court where the decree was granted. In most States, the law requires that a statistical record of each divorce also be maintained in a central file in the State office of vital statistics. Although these records vary in content from State to State, those States with central files of divorce records have adopted forms that contain basic identifying information relating to the parties concerned, the decree, and the marriage being dissolved. Most States also include information about the children affected by the divorce.

Central files of divorce records in State vital statistics offices facilitate the use of the records as proof that a marriage has been dissolved. Such proof of divorce, dissolution, or annulment is often required by a variety of governmental and private agencies. A search of court records to obtain a transcript of a record of divorce is time

consuming and costly, especially if the date and place of divorce are unknown. It is more efficient for the State vital statistics office to issue a certified copy of the record or provide the name of the county where the decree was originally filed. Rapid and accurate verification of a particular divorce is of special value to members of the legal profession to settle estates or to conduct other legal matters. Obtaining the information from a single office in a State not only simplifies the work and cost to the applicant but also greatly reduces the burden placed upon local custodians of the records. In addition, a system of central files assures that a duplicate set of records is available in the event of fire or other disaster.

Data from divorce records are used for many worthwhile statistical purposes. They are used to analyze and interpret current levels and changes in marriage and divorce, to project fertility and population changes, and to relate the results of those investigations to social and economic problems. Governmental agencies and legislative groups use divorce statistics to develop, implement, and evaluate public programs and policies. Scholars, researchers, writers, and journalists follow trends and differentials in family formation, dissolution, and reformation. Religious bodies and voluntary organizations study the quality and stability of family life. Many businesses, including economic consulting firms, use divorce data in forecasting markets for goods and services and in developing new products.

## **U.S. Standard Certificate of Divorce, Dissolution of Marriage, or Annulment**

The National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control, U.S. Public Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services, provides leadership and coordination in the development of the U.S. Standard Certificate of Divorce, Dissolution of Marriage, or Annulment, which serves as a model for use by the States. This certificate is revised periodically in collaboration with clerks of court; State health officials, registrars, and statisticians; Federal agencies; and other providers or users of vital statistics. The purpose of the revision is to ensure that the data collected relate to current and future needs. In the revision process, each item on the standard certificate is evaluated thoroughly for its registration, legal, statistical, and research value.

Each State is encouraged to adopt the recommended standard certificate as a means of developing a uniform national divorce registration and statistics system. Although many States use the recommended standard certificate, some States modify it to comply with State laws and regulations or to meet their own particular needs for information.

Uniformity of data allows for comparable national statistics, as well as the comparison of individual State data with national data and with data from other States. Certificate uniformity among the States also increases its acceptability as a legal record.

## **Confidentiality of vital records**

State and local registrars protect the information on vital records from unwarranted or indiscriminate disclosure. Vital records are available only to persons who are authorized access by State law and supporting regulations. Legal safeguards to the confidentiality of vital records have been strengthened in recent years. Extensive legal and administrative measures are used to protect individuals and establishments from unauthorized disclosure of personal information.

The format of the divorce certificate is designed to further assure confidentiality of information. The upper part of the certificate contains information that identifies the individuals whose marriage is being dissolved and items of information concerning the marriage. The lower part of the certificate contains confidential information for statistical use only. These items relate to the husband and wife and are not included on certified copies.

## **Specific responsibilities**

The final decree of divorce is kept in the files of the court that grants the decree. The divorce reporting form is a separate document that is sent to the State office of vital statistics. In the preferred procedure, the petitioner's attorney is responsible for completing the personal information on this form. The clerk of court is responsible for completing those items related to the decree and for transmitting the report to the State office of vital statistics.

### **Clerk of court**

The clerk of court should:

- Provide the divorce reporting form to the petitioner or petitioner's attorney with instructions for completing the personal data.
- Notify the petitioner or attorney that the form must be completed and filed with the clerk of court at the time the petition is filed.
- Receive the completed form from the petitioner or attorney with the petition (items 1-14b and 24a-27b).
- Review the form for completeness and accuracy.
- Complete the form when the final decree is granted (items 15-20).
- Sign the form noting title and date (items 21-23).

- Forward the completed form to the State office of vital statistics within the time specified by law.
- Cooperate with the State registrar by replying promptly to any queries concerning any entry on the form.

### **Attorney**

The petitioner or petitioner's attorney should:

- Obtain all personal data on the reporting form.
- Complete the form and return it to the clerk of court at the time the petition is filed.

### **Judge**

The judge should make certain that the information necessary to complete the form has been provided to the clerk of court by the divorcing parties or their attorneys, preferably *before* the case is heard but at least before the final decree is granted.

### **State health department**

The State health department administers the statewide divorce registration system under the laws and regulations of the State. Divorce certificates are placed on permanent file by the State office of vital statistics after they have been accepted for filing.

# **Part I—General instructions for completing certificate**

The information necessary for preparing the divorce certificate is obtained from the attorney or from the parties to the divorce and court records.

If worksheets are used to gather and record the information on the form, the clerk of court should review the entries on the worksheet for accuracy. The actual certificate can then be completed from the worksheets and signed by the clerk of court.

It is essential that the certificate be prepared as a permanent legal record:

- File the original certificate or report with the State registrar. Reproductions or duplicates are not acceptable.
- Avoid abbreviations except those recommended in the specific item instructions.
- Verify with the informant the spelling of names, especially those that have different spellings for the same sound (for example, Smith or Smyth, Gail or Gayle, and Wolfe or Wolf).
- Refer problems not covered in these instructions to the State office of vital statistics.
- Use the current form designated by the State.
- Type all entries whenever possible. If a typewriter cannot be used, print legibly in permanent black ink.
- Complete each item, following the specific instructions for that item.
- Do not make alterations or erasures.
- Obtain all signatures. Rubber stamp or other facsimile signatures are not acceptable.

## Part II—Completing the divorce certificate

These instructions pertain to the 1989 revision of the U.S. Standard Certificate of Divorce, Dissolution of Marriage, or Annulment.

### Upper portion of the divorce certificate

The upper portion of the divorce certificate contains the items required for identification of the individuals whose marriage is being dissolved, the place and date of the marriage, children affected by the decree, the name of the petitioner's attorney, and when, where, and by whom the decree was granted. These are the items of information usually furnished to establish the fact of divorce.

#### 1. HUSBAND'S NAME (*First, Middle, Last*)

Type or print the full first, middle, and last names of the husband. Do not abbreviate.

Entries of Jr., Sr., II, and so forth, following the last name are acceptable.

*The full name of the husband along with the full name of the wife is needed to identify the individuals filing for divorce. It is also used for indexing and querying records of divorce.*

#### 2a-c HUSBAND'S RESIDENCE

The husband's residence is the place where his household is located at the time of completing the certificate. This is not necessarily the same as his "home State," "voting residence," "mailing address," or "legal residence." The city, county, and State entered should be that of the place where the husband actually lives. Never enter a temporary residence, such as one used during a visit, business trip, or vacation. However, place of residence during a tour of military duty or during attendance at college is *not* considered temporary and should be entered on the certificate as the husband's place of residence.

#### 2a. RESIDENCE—CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION [Husband]

Enter the name of the city, town, or location where the husband lives. This may differ from the city, town, or location used in his mailing address.

**2b. RESIDENCE—COUNTY [Husband]**

Enter the name of the county where the husband lives.

**2c. RESIDENCE—STATE [Husband]**

Enter the name of the State where the husband lives. This may differ from the State used in his mailing address. If the husband is not a resident of the United States, enter the name of the country and the name of the unit of government that is the nearest equivalent to a State.

*Residence is used to determine where the divorce petition can be filed. In most States, it is mandatory that at least one of the parties to the divorce reside in the State where the petition is filed. Residence also provides the basis for statistics on the divorce rate for residents of particular areas and for comparing place of divorce with place of residence.*

**3. BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) [Husband]**

If the husband was born in the United States, enter the name of the State.

If the husband was born in a foreign country or a U.S. territory, enter the name of the country or territory.

If the husband was born in the United States but the State is unknown, enter “U.S.—unknown.”

If the husband was born in a foreign country but the country is unknown, enter “Foreign—unknown.”

If no information is available regarding place of birth, enter “Unknown.” Do not leave this item blank.

*Birthplace is an aid in identification. It is also useful for analyzing differences in marital stability between native and foreign-born persons and persons born in different States. This information is also used in genealogical research.*

**4. DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year) [Husband]**

Enter the exact month, day, and year that the husband was born.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

*Date of birth is used for identification and to calculate the exact age at divorce, marriage, and separation. In combination with other items on the record, it is used to study factors affecting family dissolution and to analyze trends in divorce rates by age.*

**5a. WIFE’S NAME (First, Middle, Last)**

Type or print the full legal first, middle, and last names of the wife. Do not abbreviate.

**5b. MAIDEN SURNAME [Wife]**

Enter the last name of the wife as given at birth or adoption, not a name acquired by marriage.

*The full name of the wife along with the full name of the husband is needed to identify the individuals filing for divorce. It is also used for indexing and querying divorce records. The maiden surname is important for identification of women because it remains constant throughout a lifetime in contrast to other names, which may change because of marriage or divorce.*

## **6a-c WIFE'S RESIDENCE**

The wife's residence is the place where her household is located at the time of completing the certificate. This is not necessarily the same as her "home State," "voting residence," "mailing address," or "legal residence." The city, county, and State entered should be that of the place where the wife actually lives. Never enter a temporary residence, such as one used during a visit, business trip, or vacation. However, place of residence during a tour of military duty or during attendance at college is *not* considered temporary and should be entered on the certificate as the wife's place of residence.

### **6a. RESIDENCE—CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION [Wife]**

Enter the name of the city, town, or location where the wife lives. This may differ from the city, town, or location used in her mailing address.

### **6b. RESIDENCE—COUNTY [Wife]**

Enter the name of the county where the wife lives.

### **6c. RESIDENCE—STATE [Wife]**

Enter the name of the State where the wife lives. This may differ from the State used in her mailing address. If the wife is not a resident of the United States, enter the name of the country and the name of the unit of government that is the nearest equivalent to a State.

*Residence is used to determine where the divorce petition can be filed. In most States, it is mandatory that at least one of the parties to the divorce reside in the State where the petition is filed. Residence also provides the basis for statistics on the divorce rate for residents of particular areas and for comparing place of divorce with place of residence.*

## **7. BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) [Wife]**

If the wife was born in the United States, enter the name of the State.

If the wife was born in a foreign country or a U.S. territory, enter the name of the country or territory.

If the wife was born in the United States but the State is unknown, enter "U.S.—unknown."

If the wife was born in a foreign country but the country is unknown, enter "Foreign—unknown."

If no information is available regarding place of birth, enter “Unknown.” Do not leave this item blank.

*Birthplace is an aid in identification and is useful for analyzing differences in marital stability between native and foreign-born persons and persons born in different States. This information is also used in genealogical research.*

**8. DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year) [Wife]**

Enter the exact month, day, and year that the wife was born.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

*Date of birth is used for identification and to calculate the exact age at divorce, marriage, and separation. In combination with other items on the record, it is used to study factors affecting family dissolution and to analyze trends in divorce rates by age.*

**9a-c WHERE MARRIED**

**9a. PLACE OF THIS MARRIAGE—CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION**

Enter the name of the city, town, or location where the marriage ceremony took place.

**9b. COUNTY**

Enter the name of the county where the marriage ceremony took place.

**9c. STATE OR FOREIGN COUNTRY**

If the marriage ceremony took place in the United States, enter the name of the State.

If the marriage ceremony did not take place in the United States, enter the name of the country or territory.

*Place of marriage is used to develop statistics associating place of divorce with place where the marriage occurred. These statistics are used to study the effects of different State marriage and divorce laws on age at marriage and on marital stability. They are also used for demographic and sociological research, identification, genealogical studies, and studies of mobility.*

**10. DATE OF THIS MARRIAGE (Month, Day, Year)**

Enter the exact month, day, and year that the marriage occurred.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

*The exact month, day, and year of the marriage is used for computing age at marriage, duration of marriage to separation, and duration of marriage to divorce. This information is used for estimating the likelihood of divorce by duration of marriage.*

**11. DATE COUPLE LAST RESIDED IN SAME HOUSEHOLD (Month, Day, Year)**

Enter the exact month, day, and year that the couple ceased to live in the same household.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

If the exact date the couple last resided in the same household is unknown, obtain an estimate from the petitioner.

*This information is used to determine the length of waiting periods for filing for divorce. Because this date usually marks the end of the marital union, it can also be used to compute the actual, compared with the legal, duration of the marriage.*

**12. NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN THIS HOUSEHOLD AS OF THE DATE IN ITEM 11**

Number \_\_\_\_\_  None

Enter the total number of children under 18 years of age in the family at the time of the marriage dissolution, regardless of whether they were born to the divorcing couple, were children of a previous marriage of either partner, or were adopted.

*This item is used to study the impact of marital instability on dependent children. It provides an indication of family size of divorcing spouses with children and can be used to study patterns of family formation and dissolution. It is also used to predict child support and welfare needs.*

**13. PETITIONER**

Husband  Wife  Both  Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Check the box that identifies the petitioner—husband, wife, both, or other. If “other” is checked, specify who the petitioner is on the line provided (for example, friend of wife or husband’s mother).

*This information is used to study patterns in filing divorce petitions and changes in such patterns, particularly as these patterns reflect changes in divorce legislation. It is also used when querying the petitioner’s attorney.*

**14a-b ATTORNEY**

**14a. NAME OF PETITIONER’S ATTORNEY (Type/Print)**

Type or print the full first, middle, and last names of the attorney for the petitioner. Do not abbreviate.

**14b. ADDRESS (Street and Number or Rural Route Number, City or Town, State, Zip Code)**

Enter the mailing address of the petitioner’s attorney.

*The name and address of the petitioner's attorney are important for querying for missing or incomplete information. Many parties to divorce or annulment change residence shortly after the final decree is granted and are difficult to contact. The petitioner's attorney usually supplies the personal information about the husband or wife and is the individual to contact for any necessary inquiries about the divorce.*

**15-23 COURT DECREE**

**15. I CERTIFY THAT THE MARRIAGE OF THE ABOVE NAMED PERSONS WAS DISSOLVED ON: (Month, Day, Year)**

The local court official should enter the exact month, day, and year that the marriage was dissolved.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

*This information confirms the exact date the marriage legally ended. It is used to calculate the duration of the marriage to divorce and time from separation to divorce.*

**16. TYPE OF DECREE—DIVORCE, DISSOLUTION, OR ANNULMENT (Specify)**

The local court official should enter the type of final decree granted.

*This information distinguishes between the type of final decree granted. Statistics on divorces and dissolutions are compiled separately from annulments.*

**17. DATE RECORDED (Month, Day, Year)**

The local court official should enter the exact month, day, and year that the final divorce decree is recorded.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

*This information is used to verify that the divorce was entered into the official court records.*

**18. NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 WHOSE PHYSICAL CUSTODY WAS AWARDED TO:**

Husband\_\_\_\_\_ Wife\_\_\_\_\_ Joint (Husband/Wife)\_\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_  No children

The local court official should enter the total number of children whose custody was awarded to each person listed. Check the box “No Children” if there were no children under age 18 in the family. This information should be obtained from the final decree of divorce. Do not leave this item blank.

*This information is used to study custody arrangements for children involved in divorce. Policy decisions related to social welfare and health are based upon this information.*

**19. COUNTY OF DECREE**

Enter the name of the county where the decree was granted.

**20. TITLE OF COURT**

Enter the exact name of the court granting the divorce; for example, “Superior Court,” “Circuit Court,” “Court of General Sessions.”

**21. SIGNATURE OF CERTIFYING OFFICIAL**

The local court official who completes the certificate and transmits it to the State office of vital statistics should sign his or her full name in permanent black ink.

**22. TITLE OF CERTIFYING OFFICIAL**

The local court official should enter his or her title.

**23. DATE SIGNED** (*Month, Day, Year*)

The local court official should enter the exact month, day, and year the certificate was signed.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

*Items 19-23 are legal items attesting to the facts of the marriage dissolution. This information identifies the record and facilitates record retrieval.*

**Lower portion of the divorce certificate**

**CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION. THE INFORMATION BELOW WILL NOT APPEAR ON CERTIFIED COPIES OF THE RECORD.**

The lower portion of the U.S. Standard Certificate of Divorce, Dissolution of Marriage, or Annulment contains information for demographic and health use only. This information (items 24-27) is separated from the identifying information and is excluded from certified copies of the certificate. The information is used for a wide range of research purposes.

**24. NUMBER OF THIS MARRIAGE—First, Second, etc. (*Specify below*)**

**24a. HUSBAND**

**24b. WIFE**

Enter the number of this marriage for the husband and for the wife.

If he or she was never married prior to this marriage, enter “First.”

If he or she was married prior to this marriage, enter the number of this marriage—“Second,” “Third,” etc.

*This information is used to study how population growth and childbearing patterns are affected by disruption and resumption of marriage and to examine the trend of marriages by previous marital history. Health surveys and other studies have shown associations between marital status and various physical and mental health problems. Number of this marriage has also been shown to be related to age at marriage, stability of the marriage, and fertility of the couple. This information may be used to assess the need for specific kinds of family health care in State or local populations.*

**25. IF PREVIOUSLY MARRIED, LAST MARRIAGE ENDED**

**25a. By Death, Divorce, Dissolution, or Annulment (Specify below) [Husband]**

If the husband was previously married, enter death, divorce, dissolution, or annulment to describe the manner in which his previous marriage ended. Do not enter how *this* marriage ended. If the husband was not previously married, enter "N.A." or "Never Married." Do not leave this item blank.

**25b. Date (Month, Day, Year) [Husband]**

Enter the exact month, day, and year that the husband's last marriage ended.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

Specify the date of death of his previous wife or the date when his last divorce, dissolution, or annulment became final. If the husband was not previously married, leave this item blank.

**25. IF PREVIOUSLY MARRIED, LAST MARRIAGE ENDED**

**25c. By Death, Divorce, Dissolution, or Annulment (Specify below) [Wife]**

If the wife was previously married, enter death, divorce, dissolution, or annulment to describe the manner in which her previous marriage ended. Do not enter how *this* marriage ended. If the wife was not previously married, enter "N.A." or "Never married." Do not leave this item blank.

**25d. DATE (Month, Day, Year) [Wife]**

Enter the exact month, day, and year that the wife's last marriage ended.

Enter the full name of the month—January, February, March, etc. Do not use a number or abbreviation to designate the month.

Specify the date of death of her previous husband or the date when her last divorce, dissolution, or annulment became final. If the wife was not previously married, leave this item blank.

*Information from items 25a-d permits the computation of divorce rates for remarriages for the previously widowed and the previously divorced. This is important for the analysis of changes or trends in patterns of marital disruption, which may affect the planning of family health care. Marital stability is associated with differences in previous marital*

*history. The likelihood of remarriage and interval to remarriage vary according to the parties' previous marital status. This information is also used by agencies such as the Social Security Administration to make projections of entitlement needs. The exact date is used for analysis of intervals between divorce, remarriage, and redivorce.*

**26. RACE—American Indian, Black, White, etc. (Specify below)**

**26a. HUSBAND**

**26b. WIFE**

Enter the race of the husband and of the wife.

For Asians and Pacific Islanders, enter the national origin such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, or Hawaiian.

If the husband or the wife is of mixed race, enter both races or origins.

*This information is used to study divorce patterns, population change, and family disruption for various racial groups. Race is an important variable in planning for and evaluating the effectiveness of family health and welfare programs.*

**27. EDUCATION (Specify only highest grade completed)**  
Elementary/Secondary (0-12)—College (1-4 or 5 +)

**27a. HUSBAND**

**27b. WIFE**

Enter the highest number of years of regular schooling completed by the husband and by the wife in either the space for elementary/secondary school or the space for college. An entry should be made in only one of the spaces for the husband and only one for the wife. The other space should be left blank. Report only those years of school that were completed. A person who enrolls in college but does not complete one full year should not be identified with any college education in this item.

Count formal schooling only. Do not include beauty, barber, trade, business, technical, or other special schools when determining the highest grade completed.

*Education is an indicator of socioeconomic status and is used in combination with other items on the certificate to measure its effect on marriage and divorce patterns.*

# **Appendixes**

**A. The U.S. Standard Certificate of Divorce, Dissolution of Marriage, or Annulment**

**B. The Divorce Registration System in the United States**

# Appendix A

## The U.S. Standard Certificate of Divorce, Dissolution of Marriage, or Annulment

**U.S. STANDARD  
CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE, DISSOLUTION  
OF MARRIAGE, OR ANNULMENT**

**TYPE/PRINT  
IN  
PERMANENT  
BLACK INK  
FOR  
INSTRUCTIONS  
SEE  
HANDBOOK**

COURT FILE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ STATE FILE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

**HUSBAND** 1. HUSBAND'S NAME (First, Middle, Last)  
**John Alex Stevens**

2a. RESIDENCE—CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION **Raleigh** 2b. COUNTY **Wake**

3c. STATE **North Carolina** 3. BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) **North Carolina** 4. DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year)  
**June 28, 1948**

**WIFE** 5a. WIFE'S NAME (First, Middle, Last)  
**Susan Marie Stevens** 5b. MAIDEN SURNAME **Petto**

6a. RESIDENCE—CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION **Oxon Hill** 6b. COUNTY **Prince Georges**

7c. STATE **Maryland** 7. BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) **Maryland** 8. DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year)  
**May 3, 1951**

**MARRIAGE** 9a. PLACE OF THIS MARRIAGE—CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION **Miami** 9b. COUNTY **Dade** 9c. STATE OR FOREIGN COUNTRY **Florida** 10. DATE OF THIS MARRIAGE (Month, Day, Year)  
**April 8, 1976**

11. DATE COUPLE LAST RESIDED IN SAME HOUSEHOLD (Month, Day, Year)  
**February 19, 1988** 12. NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN THIS HOUSEHOLD AS OF THE DATE IN ITEM 11  
Number **2**  None 13. PETITIONER  
 Husband  Wife  Both  
 Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**ATTORNEY** 14a. NAME OF PETITIONER'S ATTORNEY (Type/Print)  
**Jean K. Lovette** 14b. ADDRESS (Street and Number or Rural Route Number, City or Town, State, Zip Code)  
**666 K St., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20022**

15. I CERTIFY THAT THE MARRIAGE OF THE ABOVE NAMED PERSONS WAS DISSOLVED ON: (Month, Day, Year)  
**November 12, 1989** 16. TYPE OF DECREE—Divorce, Dissolution, or Annulment (Specify)  
**Absolute Divorce** 17. DATE RECORDED (Month, Day, Year)  
**November 14, 1989**

**DECREE** 18. NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 WHOSE PHYSICAL CUSTODY WAS AWARDED TO:  
Husband \_\_\_\_\_ Wife \_\_\_\_\_  
Joint (Husband/Wife) **2** Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 No children 19. COUNTY OF DECREE **Prince Georges** 20. TITLE OF COURT **Circuit Court**

21. SIGNATURE OF CERTIFYING OFFICIAL  
*Julia S. Thorpe* 22. TITLE OF CERTIFYING OFFICIAL  
**Clerk of Court** 23. DATE SIGNED (Month, Day, Year)  
**November 14, 1989**

**CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION. THE INFORMATION BELOW WILL NOT APPEAR ON CERTIFIED COPIES OF THE RECORD.**

24. NUMBER OF THIS MARRIAGE—First, Second, etc. (Specify below)	25. IF PREVIOUSLY MARRIED, LAST MARRIAGE ENDED		26. RACE—American Indian, Black, White, etc. (Specify below)	27. EDUCATION (Specify only highest grade completed)	
	By Death, Divorce, Dissolution, or Annulment (Specify below)	Date (Month, Day, Year)		Elementary/Secondary (0-12)	College (1-4 or 5+)
<b>HUSBAND</b> 24a. <b>Second</b>	25a. <b>Divorce</b>	25b. <b>August 3, 1973</b>	26a. <b>White</b>	27a. <b>4</b>	
<b>WIFE</b> 24b. <b>First</b>	25c. <b>Never Married</b>	25d. _____	26b. <b>American Indian</b>	27b. <b>2</b>	

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## **Appendix B**

### **The Divorce Registration System in the United States**

The registration of divorces in the United States is a State and local function. The civil laws of all States provide for a continuous and permanent divorce registration system in the courts. The registration of divorces in a centralized file in the State office of vital statistics is established in almost all States. Each system depends upon the conscientious efforts of the local attorneys, clerks of court, judges, and other officials in preparing the information needed to complete the original records and in certifying to the information on these records. For a graphic presentation of the registration system, see the accompanying chart, "Divorce Registration System in the United States."

Each State has local court districts that contain courts empowered to grant decrees of divorce, dissolution of marriage, and annulment. In States with centralized files, the clerk of court in each district collects the certificates of all divorces occurring in his or her court and transmits the completed forms to the State office of vital statistics.

The clerk of court is required to provide the petitioner or petitioner's attorney the appropriate divorce reporting form with instructions for completing the personal data. The petitioner or attorney completes the personal data on the reporting form and returns it to the clerk of court at the time the petition for divorce is filed. The clerk of court reviews the returned form for completeness and retains it in the court file pending judicial action. The judge verifies that the information necessary to complete the form has been provided to the clerk of court, either before the case is heard or before the final decree is granted. After the final decree is granted, the clerk of court completes the items related to the decree and custody of minor children and transmits the reporting form to the State office of vital statistics.

The State office of vital statistics inspects each record for promptness of filing, completeness, and accuracy of information; queries for missing or inconsistent information; numbers the records; prepares indexes; processes the records; and stores the records for permanent reference and safekeeping. Statistical information from the records is tabulated for use by State and local health departments, other governmental agencies, and various private and voluntary organizations. The data are used to evaluate social issues and to plan programs and services for the public.

An important function of the State office is to produce an index of all divorces occurring within that State. The State office can then provide the name of the county where the final decree was granted so that a person wanting a certified copy of the final divorce decree can contact the appropriate county official. In some States, the State office may also provide a certified copy of the divorce certificate on file in the State office.

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) in the Public Health Service is vested with the authority for administering vital statistics functions at the national level. Data tapes of information derived from individual records registered in the State offices, or copies of the individual records themselves, are transmitted to NCHS by States participating in the divorce-registration area (DRA). The DRA includes those States that maintain central divorce registration files and meet certain minimum standards of completeness and accuracy of reporting. Monthly, annual, and special statistical reports are prepared from these data for the United States as a whole, for the DRA, and for the component parts—counties, States, and regions—by various characteristics such as age, race, and number of children affected by the divorce. The statistics are essential to the fields of social welfare, public health, and demography. They are also used for program planning and evaluation in both business and government. NCHS serves as a focal point, exercising leadership in establishing uniform practices through model laws, standard certificate forms, handbooks, and other instructional materials for the continued improvement of the divorce registration system in the United States.

# Divorce Registration System in the United States

## *Responsible Person or Agency*

## *Divorce Certificate*

Attorney for  
the petitioner

1. Obtains the required personal data from the petitioner and completes the divorce reporting form.
2. Submits the reporting form to the clerk of court.

Clerk of court

1. Receives the completed reporting form and checks for completeness and consistency.
2. Completes the items relating to the decree and the custody of minor children when the final decree of divorce is granted.
3. Signs and forwards the completed divorce reporting form to the State office of vital statistics.

Judge

1. Verifies that the information necessary to complete the reporting form has been provided to the clerk of court by the attorneys or divorcing parties, before the decree is granted.

State  
registrar,  
office of  
vital statistics

1. Queries incomplete or inconsistent information.
2. Maintains files for permanent reference and issues certified copies.
3. Compiles health-related statistics for the State and civil divisions of the State for use of the health department and other agencies and groups interested in the fields of demography, social welfare, mental health, and public health.
4. Sends data tapes of information derived from individual records registered in the State office, or copies of the individual records themselves, to the National Center for Health Statistics.

Public Health  
Service, Centers for  
Disease Control,  
National Center for  
Health Statistics

1. Prepares and publishes national statistics of divorces.
2. Conducts research studies based on divorce records.
3. Maintains a continuing technical assistance program to improve the quality and usefulness of divorce statistics.