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IN THE 66TH DISTRICT COURT OR
THE COUNTY COURT AT LAW OF
HILL COUNTY, TEXAS

STANDING ORDER REGARDING FILING OF CHILD'S BIRTH CERTIFICATE IN SUITS AFFECTING THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

I. PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY

This Standing Order is issued pursuant to Texas Family Code § 102.008(c-1), as amended by the 89th Legislature, effective September 1, 2025. The purpose of this Order is to ensure that all original petitions in suits affecting the parent-child relationship ("SAPCR") comply with statutory requirements regarding submission of a certified copy of the child's birth certificate or other proof of parentage.

II. APPLICATION

This Standing Order applies to:

1. All original petitions in SAPCRs, including petitions for divorce with children, conservatorship, possession or access, child support, termination, and adoption; and
2. Any other pleading initiating a suit that affects the parent-child relationship, except petitions filed by the Title IV-D agency.

III. COURT ORDER AND REQUIREMENTS

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Certified Birth Certificate Required

The petitioner shall file with the Court a certified copy of each child's birth certificate, if available to the petitioner, at the time of filing the petition.

2. Filing Under Seal

The certified birth certificate, or other proof of the identity of the child's parents, must be filed under seal and separately from all other pleadings or exhibits.

- For e-filings, the filer shall select the "Sealed" document category in the eFileTexas system.
- The clerk shall maintain the certificate, or other proof of identity of the child's parents, in a confidential portion of the case file, not accessible to the public.

3. When Certified Copy Not Available

If a certified copy of the child's birth certificate is not available to the petitioner, the petitioner shall:

- State in the petition or in a separate affidavit that the certified copy is not available; and
- Be prepared to provide documentation showing reasonable diligence in attempting to obtain it.

4. Alternative Proof of Parentage

If a certified copy is not available to any party, the Court may order any party to file alternative proof of the identity of the child's parent or parents, which may include:

- An Acknowledgment or Denial of Paternity;
- A court order adjudicating parentage;
- Results of a genetic test; or
- Other reliable evidence establishing the parent-child relationship.

5. Failure to Comply

Failure to comply with this Standing Order may result in the petition being deemed deficient, and the Court may:

- Decline to issue temporary or final orders until the required documentation is filed; or
- Dismiss the pending suit for want of prosecution at any court proceeding.

IV. INSTRUCTIONS TO PETITIONERS ON OBTAINING A CERTIFIED COPY OF A BIRTH CERTIFICATE

A. Child Born in Texas

- 1. In Person (recommended):**
Request at the Hill County Clerk's Office.
Photo ID required.
Applicable fees and processing times determined by the Clerk.
- 2. Online Request:**
Visit the Texas Department of State Health Services – Vital Statistics Unit:
<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/vs>
Select "Order a Birth Certificate Online."
Provide identifying information, valid ID, and payment.
- 3. By Mail:**
Complete Form VS-140 and mail with photo ID and fee to:
Texas Vital Statistics Section
P.O. Box 12040
Austin, TX 78711-2040

B. Child Born in Another U.S. State or Territory

1. Locate the state's vital records office via the CDC directory:
<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w>
2. Submit the application with required information, ID, and fee.
3. Requests may also be made through VitalChek.com.

C. Child Born Outside the United States

- 1. U.S. Citizen Birth Abroad:**
Request a Consular Report of Birth Abroad (Form FS-240) from the U.S. Department of State.
- 2. Non-U.S. Birth Certificates:**
Contact the appropriate foreign civil registry, embassy, or consulate.
Certified translations may be required.
Authentication or apostille may be necessary for use in Texas courts.

V. WHO MAY OBTAIN A CERTIFIED COPY OF A BIRTH CERTIFICATE

IT IS FOUND that under Texas Health and Safety Code § 191.051, a certified copy of a birth record may be issued only to a "properly qualified applicant."

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Licensed Attorney of Record as Properly Qualified Applicant

A licensed attorney of record representing a party in a SAPCR action pending before this Court is a "properly qualified applicant" for purposes of obtaining a certified copy of a child's birth certificate in connection with that action.

a. Bases for Qualification

The Court finds that the attorney qualifies as:

- The registrant's legal agent or representative; or
- A person with a direct and tangible interest because the birth certificate is necessary to implement Texas Family Code § 102.008(c-1).

b. Limitations

This Order:

- Applies only to attorneys actively representing a party of record;
- Authorizes access only as reasonably necessary for representation; and
- Does not expand access beyond existing law.

2. Compliance with DSHS Procedures

All requests remain subject to identification and verification requirements of the Texas Department of State Health Services.

VI. ISSUANCE AND SERVICE OF THIS STANDING ORDER

The Hill County District Clerk or County Clerk shall issue and serve the petitioner with this Standing Order in any original SAPCR that does not comply with Texas Family Code § 102.008(c-1). Service may be made in accordance with Rule 21a or by personal delivery at the time of filing.

VII. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Standing Order is effective September 1, 2025, and applies to every SAPCR filed on or after that date. It shall remain in effect until modified or rescinded by further order of the Court.

IT IS ORDERED this 5th day of JUNE, 2026.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a series of loops and a horizontal line.

JUDGE JUSTIN W. LEWIS
66TH DISTRICT COURT
HILL COUNTY, TEXAS

A handwritten signature in blue ink, featuring a large, stylized 'M' followed by a series of loops and a horizontal line.

JUDGE MATT CRAIN
COUNTY COURT AT LAW
HILL COUNTY, TEXAS