

600.16A Termination and adoption records closed — exceptions — penalty.

1. The permanent termination of parental rights record of the juvenile court under chapter 600A and the permanent adoption record of the juvenile court or court shall be sealed by the clerk of the juvenile court or the clerk of court, as appropriate, when they are complete and after the time for appeal has expired.

2. All papers and records pertaining to a termination of parental rights under chapter 600A and to an adoption shall not be open to inspection and the identity of the biological parents of an adopted person shall not be revealed except under any of the following circumstances:

a. An agency involved in placement shall contact the adopting parents or the adult adopted child regarding eligibility of the adopted child for benefits based on entitlement of benefits or inheritance from the terminated biological parents.

b. The juvenile court or court, for good cause, shall order the opening of the permanent adoption record of the juvenile court or court for the adopted person who is an adult and reveal the names of either or both of the biological parents following consideration of both of the following:

(1) A biological parent may file an affidavit requesting that the juvenile court or court reveal or not reveal the parent's identity. The juvenile court or court shall consider any such affidavit in determining whether there is good cause to order opening of the records. To facilitate the biological parents in filing an affidavit, the department shall, upon request of a biological parent, provide the biological parent with an adoption information packet containing an affidavit for completion and filing with the juvenile court or court.

(2) If the adopted person who applies for revelation of the biological parents' identity has a sibling who is a minor and who has been adopted by the same parents, the juvenile court or court may deny the application on the grounds that revelation to the applicant may also indirectly and harmfully permit the same revelation to the applicant's minor sibling.

c. A biological sibling of an adopted person may file or may request that the department file an affidavit in the juvenile court or court in which the adopted person's adoption records have been sealed requesting that the juvenile court or court reveal or not reveal the sibling's name to the adopted person. The juvenile court or court shall consider any such affidavit in determining whether there is good cause to order opening of the records upon application for revelation by the adopted person. However, the name of the biological sibling shall not be revealed until the biological sibling has attained majority.

d. The juvenile court or court may, upon competent medical evidence, open termination or adoption records if opening is shown to be necessary to save the life of or prevent irreparable physical or mental harm to an adopted person or the person's offspring. The juvenile court or court shall make every reasonable effort to prevent the identity of the biological parents from becoming revealed under this paragraph to the adopted person. The juvenile court or court may, however, permit revelation of the identity of the biological parents to medical personnel attending the adopted person or the person's offspring. These medical personnel shall make every reasonable effort to prevent the identity of the biological parents from becoming revealed to the adopted person.

3. In addition to other procedures by which adoption records may be opened under this section, if both of the following conditions are met, the department, the clerk of court, or the agency which made the placement shall open the adoption record for inspection and shall reveal the identity of the biological parents to the adult adopted child or the identity of the adult adopted child to the biological parents:

a. A biological parent has placed in the adoption record written consent to revelation of the biological parent's identity to the adopted child at an age specified by the biological parent, upon request of the adopted child.

b. An adult adopted child has placed in the adoption record written consent to revelation of the identity of the adult adopted child to a biological parent.

A person who has placed in the adoption record written consent pursuant to paragraph "a" or "b" of this subsection may withdraw the consent at any time by placing a written withdrawal of consent statement in the adoption record.

Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection, if the adult adopted person has a sibling who is a minor and who has also been adopted by the same parents, the department, the

clerk of court, or the agency which made the placement may deny the request of either the adult adopted person or the biological parent to open the adoption records and to reveal the identities of the parties pending determination by the juvenile court or court that there is good cause to open the records pursuant to subsection 2.

4. An adopted person whose adoption became final prior to July 4, 1941, and whose adoption record was not required to be sealed at the time when the adoption record was completed, shall not be required to show good cause for an order opening the adoption record under this subsection, provided that the juvenile court or court shall consider any affidavit filed under this subsection.

5. Notwithstanding subsection 2, a termination of parental rights order issued pursuant to this chapter, section 600A.9, or any other chapter shall be disclosed to the child support recovery unit, upon request, without court order.

6. Any person, other than the adopting parents or the adopted person, who discloses information in violation of this section, is guilty of a simple misdemeanor.

92 Acts, ch 1142, §2; 92 Acts, ch 1196, §4; 94 Acts, ch 1046, §17; 2000 Acts, ch 1145, §19 – 21; 2001 Acts, ch 79, §3; 2005 Acts, ch 112, §19

Referred to in §144.24, 237.21, 238.24, 600.16B