

Document Authentication

Information

Authentication is the process of verifying the official nature of a document so that it can be accepted at face value by officials in another country. Various documents (birth/death, marriage/divorce, police records, corporate good standings, etc.) submitted to this office are being used internationally for adoptions, dual citizenship, doing business, transferring school records, etc.

There are two ways in which documents to be used for official purposes in other countries can be authenticated. Some nations are signatories to the Hague Convention of 1961. The Hague Treaty is an international treaty agreeing to accept the signature of the Secretary of State of each state, without having it certified by the U.S. Secretary of State. Documents going to those nations need only be authenticated by the attachment of an "apostille" to each document. In Minnesota, an apostille is issued with respect to the name of the Minnesota notary public, county or state official who has notarized the signature of the person or the official issuing the document.

Documents to be used in all other nations are authenticated by what is called a "certificate of office," which requires more intermediary steps. **You always should check with the consulate or embassy of the particular nation involved as to what that nation requires for an authentication to be valid.**

FAQ's

1. Which countries require apostilles?

Countries which signed the Hague Treaty require apostilles. See the U.S. State Department website for a list of those countries:
<http://www.state.gov/m/a/auth>

2. How do I have documents authenticated?

Authentications may be completed by mail or in person.

Mail: The cost is \$5 per document and checks or money orders are made payable to the Secretary of State. These requests will be mailed back to the customer

In-Person: Expedited while you wait or expedited drop off to be picked up the following day services, cost \$5 per document plus an additional \$20 fee for each different official notarizing the document.

3. What are the steps in the authentication process?

The steps for certifying most documents are shown below.

Certificate of Office:

1. The document must be notarized by a Minnesota Notary Public, County Official or State Official.
2. The document must go to the filing office at the county level where the appropriate county filing officer then authenticates the signature of the notary public. If a Notary Public the county office of the residence of the Notary is the appropriate office. Most county offices do charge a fee for this service.
3. The document is mailed or brought to the Office of the Secretary of State.
4. The Certificate of Office is stapled to the document.
5. Normally, the next step is to submit the Certificate and document to the consulate or embassy of the nation of intended use. Note: Some nations will let you skip the intermediate step of having the county official authenticate the signature. Check with the appropriate consulate or embassy on this issue.

Apostille:

1. The document must be notarized by a Minnesota Notary Public, County Official or State Official.
2. The document is mailed or brought to the Office of the Secretary of State.
3. The Apostille is stapled to the document.
4. The Apostille and the document are ready for use.

Notary Certificate:

1. The name of a Minnesota Notary Public must be supplied by the requestor in person or through the mail.
2. The notary database maintained by the Minnesota Department of Commerce is searched to verify the individual is a Notary Public registered and active in Minnesota.
3. A Notary Certificate is created attesting to the fact that an individual holds the title of Notary Public and is active.
4. The Notary Certificate is ready for use.

4. What must I do to have my school records certified?

Transcript:

1. Obtain a copy of the student's transcript from the records or administrative office of the school.
2. The registrar's signature on the transcript must be an original.
3. The transcript must be notarized with an original signature by a Minnesota Notary Public and have the correct notarial jurat.
4. The document is then mailed or brought in to the Office of the Secretary of State.

Diploma:

1. Obtain the diploma from the records or administrative office of the school.
2. The signatures on the diploma must be notarized with an original signature by a Minnesota Notary Public and have the correct notarial jurat.
3. The document is then mailed or brought in to the Office of the Secretary of State.

Substitute Document:

If the student is a senior but will not receive a diploma they must have a substitute document validated and authenticated in addition to the transcript. A certificate of completion can be used in lieu of the diploma.

1. The substitute document is obtained from the records or administrative office of the school.
2. The signatures on the substitute document must be notarized with an original signature by a Minnesota Notary Public and have the correct notarial jurat.

3. The document is then mailed or brought in to the Office of the Secretary of state.

Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.
Telephone: (402) 437-5218

5. What are the common problems (reasons for rejection) encountered in the authentication process?

1. Insufficient Fees - The authentication fee is \$5 per document (with an additional \$20 fee per public official's signature for over the counter transactions). That means \$5 for each copy or duplicate original.
2. Not Properly Notarized - All documents must be properly signed by a person representing the agency issuing the document and are required to be an original signature NOT a photocopied signature.
3. Notary Commission - The commission must be valid and up to date and the expiration date on the notary stamp must be accurate. If the notary is not up to date the Department of Commerce must be contacted at 651-296-6319.
4. Country Required - Each document or the cover letter must identify the country of intended use so the correct authentication is attached to the document.

Minnesota Secretary of State - Certification

60 Empire Drive, Suite 100
Saint Paul, MN 55103-2141

TTY: 1-800-627-3529

Office Hours: 8 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.
Public Counter Hours 8:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.
Email: Customer.services@state.mn.us

Secretary of State home:
<http://www.sos.state.mn.us>

Secretary of State authentication information:
<http://www.sos.state.mn.us/home/index.asp?page=97>

Secretary of State authentication FAQ:
[http://www.sos.state.mn.us/home/index.asp?page=12
&select_faq_by_faq_cat=8](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/home/index.asp?page=12&select_faq_by_faq_cat=8)

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6. What other agencies should I contact as related links?

Birth and Death Records
Minnesota Department of Health
717 Delaware Street Southeast
Minneapolis, MN 55440-9441
651-215-5800
web: www.health.state.mn.us

Passports

To obtain a passport you can go to any major post office or the County offices of your residence.

Or visit the State Departments website at:
travel.state.gov/passport_services.html

Marriage Records

A certified certificate of marriage can be obtained from the County offices in which the marriage took place.

Immigration and Naturalization Services

For the Jurisdiction of: Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North

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