

BARRIERS TO OBTAINING STATE-ISSUED PHOTO ID

The Colorado Collaborative ID Project has been assisting more than 5,000 people a year for the past 7 years, to obtain a Colorado ID. Many simply cannot afford the cost (\$10.50 state ID, \$17.75 Colorado birth certificate, more for out-of-state birth certificates). The simplest cases are those in which one has lost a current or recently expired Colorado ID, or has a current ID from a legal presence state (not Alaska, Illinois, New Mexico, Utah or Washington) with the middle name spelled out.

However, there are significant barriers for populations whose cases are not so simple.

1. **COST OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:** If you need to obtain a birth certificate to complete your application to the DMV, you can pay anywhere from around \$15 to \$40, depending on where you were born. If you have no documents at all and need to submit school records, marriage or divorce records, and medical records in addition to the birth certificate, you can spend an additional and significant amount of money and time.
2. **ABILITY TO OBTAIN DOCUMENTS:** If the subject has no documents at all, three certified records in addition to the birth certificate are required. As mentioned above, this means school, jail, medical, tax, military and other such records that are certified and contain your identifying information: full name, date of birth. For women who have changed their name through marriage, ALL marriage records will need to be obtained. Aside from the cost, this is a monumental task for those without an Internet connection or who do not know how to use a computer. For those with no fixed address to which to send the records, it is impossible.
3. **MISMATCHED DOCUMENTATION:** Women and adoptees are particularly vulnerable to this problem. When the DMV reviews your documents, they must be consistent and they must match your information in Social Security's database. Multiple marriages and divorces can leave women with differing last names on their documents. This problem happens also with adopted persons who decided informally to go back to their birth name, or whose adopted parents did not change the name with Social Security, or where foster parents casually assigned their own last name to a child. In many cases, such persons will need a legal name change, a 6-month process that costs around \$200.
4. **NO BIRTH CERTIFICATE:** Many elderly people were born at home and never had their births registered with the state. Without a birth certificate on file, such persons have no easy means of proving legal presence. In some cases, nursing homes that accept Medicaid demand a birth certificate. It takes a convincing series of alternative documents (Census, baptismal, primary school, marriage records) to persuade the DMV to issue an ID, and/or to persuade the state in which the person was born to issue a delayed registration of birth. Likewise, some birth certificates include spelling errors or are incomplete ("baby boy" rather than baby's name) and must be amended before an ID can be issued.

It's clear that the populations most affected by these barriers are the poor, the homeless, the elderly on fixed incomes, domestic violence victims, people with disabilities, persons with mental health issues, and young people just out of foster care, or who are distanced from their families. Most of these individuals are forced to struggle without an ID unless they are assisted by an advocate.