# Correcting mis-matched names on identity documents

Having trouble getting a passport, Real ID, or government benefits because the name on your birth certificate doesn't match the name on your ID? In many cases, the problem is easily solved by presenting a marriage license, adoption record, court-ordered name change, or other supporting documents.  People without such supporting documents can run into difficulty.

How does this happen?  In the past, Californians could change their name by simply using a new name for an extended period. They could go to the DMV, social security, or schools, and tell the agency they've changed their name, and the agency would update its records and issue new documents. Many children had their name changed this way when their parents reconsidered the name, or to match their stepfather's name when their mother married. Many people don't even realize that the name they've used for as long as they remember is not the name on their birth certificate. With the rise of identity theft, fraud, and terrorism, most agencies will no longer change the name on official documents without a marriage license or court order.

If you are having trouble because your birth certificate and other documents don't match, you may need to apply for a court-ordered name change. This will provide official documentation changing the name on your birth certificate to the name on other documents. This order can then be used to make sure everything matches, and to apply for other documents such as passports, Real IDs, or other benefits.

For more information on name changes, see our Name Change page (https://www.saclaw.org/legal_topic/name-or-gender-change/) .