

PEN DEMOGRAPHIC TIPS

Below are some tips on how to identify legal name formats and navigate legal documents when registering/updating student demographic information. Please send any questions or feedback to pens.coordinator@gov.bc.ca.

Asian Names

Many Asian cultures' identifications do not differentiate given names between legal first name and middle name fields. Their languages have legal first names and surnames. Depending on the legal document, there are three variations you may see, for example: KIM, Minji; KIM, Min-Ji; or KIM, Min Ji. In cases where a space appears, such as in the example KIM, Min ji, this should be considered a two-word first name. (Typically, we do not split given names between first and middle name fields.) See below.

Correct

Legal Surname = KIM

Legal First Name = Min Ji

Legal Middle Name =

Incorrect

Legal Surname = KIM

Legal First Name = Min

Legal Middle Name = Ji

When a name or legal name change includes an anglicised or English language name, the first name may appear as a three-word name, or the student's Asian name may be moved, in full, to act as a middle name. See below.

Correct

Legal Surname = KIM

Legal First Name = Julie Min Ji

Legal Middle Name =

Correct

Legal Surname = KIM

Legal First Name = Julie

Legal Middle Name = Min Ji

Incorrect

Legal Surname = Kim

Legal Given Name = Julie Min

Legal Middle Name = Ji

The registration form may provide guidance when you are unsure which of the two correct options to use. Please contact the PENS.Coordinator@gov.bc.ca with any specific queries.

Culturally, Filipino names have two or more first names, and the mother's maiden name is reported as the student's middle name.

Correct

Legal Surname = Mendoza

Legal First Name = Felix Fabio

Legal Middle Name = Tan

Incorrect

Legal Surname = Mendoza

Legal First Name = Felix

Legal Middle Name = Fabio Tan

Some Asian cultures follow different naming conventions and may have one, multiple, or no given names reported as middle names. For example, the Vietnamese name NGUYEN, Thi Thuy Ngoc could have one, two, or no middle names. When unsure, please refer to the registration form as a guide.

Please refer to the registration form as a guide to reading your legal document.

Permanent Resident Cards or Confirmation of Permanent Resident Forms

If government issued identification is provided, use that as the guide for the student's name. Permanent Resident Cards or Confirmation of Permanent Resident Forms often do not include the student's full name and should not be used as primary identification if newer government issued identification has been provided.

Mononym Names: Students with No Legal Surname or Given Name

Some passports list the surname field as blank. Since both PEN and MyEducation BC require a legal surname for search criteria, the student's legal mononym name must be entered into the "Legal Surname" field. To note this record as a mononym, place an apostrophe in the "Legal First Name" field. Please refer to the most recent government issued legal document and the Canadian or BC issued immigration document as a guide, whenever possible.

Using the name Parminder Kaur as an example, the Canadian immigration document would read one of two ways:

Option One

Legal Surname = Parminder Kaur

Legal First Name =

Legal Middle Name =

Option Two

Legal Surname = Kaur

Legal First Name = Parminder

Legal Middle Name =

If the legal document has the name as in option one, enter the legal surname as such and an apostrophe in the "Legal First Name" field. When the PEN request comes in, the PEN system may automatically issue the "Missing First Name" error on your PEN activity report. If this happens, please reply to the PEN notification email stating that you had a student with an apostrophe returned as having a missing first name, and the ministry will assign a PEN for this student.

Accented Letters on Foreign Identification

Some cultures use different alphabets than the English alphabet; therefore, some foreign passports contain symbols within the person's name. For example, a German passport with a legal surname of MÜLLER reflects German spelling. However, at the bottom of all passports are two lines of text, the first which is universally in English. Using the example of Müller, this line would show the name spelled as MUELLER, which is the English spelling and correct spelling to use.

Some foreign passports list a person's full name on one line. Using the earlier example of the Vietnamese name NGUYEN, Thi Thuy Ngoc, the way to determine the naming convention between legal surname and given names is by referring to the bottom of the passport. There you will see the three letters representing the country the passport is from (e.g., VTM) and the person's legal surname. The break between legal surname and given names is separated by a double arrow (>>) symbol. For example, in "VTM>NGUYEN>>THI>THUY>NGOC>>>>" the double arrow symbol between "Nguyen" and "Thi" establishes "Nguyen" as the legal surname and "Thi Thuy Ngoc" and the given names, which would generally be placed in the "Legal First Name" field.

Translated Documents

Do not use translated documents as proof of legal name formats. Using the name MIKHAIL as an example, this may be shown as translated to Michael; however, there are multiple variations of the English spelling of this name. Instead of using a translated birth certificate, use any Canadian government issued document (e.g., VISA, PRC, etc.) to note how the name was reported to Immigration Canada.

Foreign Birth Certificates

When foreign birth certificates that are not in English do not clearly show the current name format and spelling, please use any Canadian or BC government issued legal identification document instead.

Gender Reassignment Requirements to Change Name and Gender

When a student is changing their name to reflect a change in gender, the first document provided to the school is usually a legal name change form.

Effective January 10, 2022, the PEN team no longer requires identification for a gender change. This change is in keeping with the information provided in the [Change of Gender Designation on Birth Certificates - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/life_stages/children_youth_services/child_welfare/change_gender_designation_birth_certificate_province_of_british_columbia) resource. According to the Change of Gender Designation on Birth Certificates resource, effective January 10, 2022, adults, and minors 12 years and older who wish to change their gender designation on a BC birth certificate no longer require a physician's or psychologist's confirmation. Minors under 12 years old require a physician or psychologist confirmation. Applicants under 19 years old require consent of all parents with guardianship.

Please note:

- Please note, a legal name change form from Vital Statistics does not indicate a gender change.
- Identification is still required for change of name and/or change to the date of birth

Adopted Students' Legal Name Change

When a student is placed for adoption, the school usually receives a letter from a Ministry of Children and Family Development adoption worker, requesting the student's legal names be changed on the student's records. The Ministry of Education does not update legal names based on these letters, nor should schools. School staff can use these letters to update the usual/preferred names; however, *schools should only change the legal names when presented with either a copy of the adoption order or the updated birth certificate.*

The adoption is not finalized until the adoption order is issued. The adoption order is granted by the courts six months after placement, and the family may order an updated birth certificate upon receiving the adoption order.