



**COLLÈGE DES MÉDECINS  
DU QUÉBEC**

*Une médecine de qualité  
au service du public*

**POLICY RESPECTING A PROFESSIONAL'S NAME  
AND NAME CHANGE REQUESTS**

**Legal Services Division  
Of the Collège des médecins du Québec  
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## 1. Purpose and scope

The purpose of this policy is to develop standards for the choice of given names and surname under which a professional may register with the Collège des médecins du Québec (the “College”) as well as for identity verification. This policy also is intended to establish guidelines for name change requests. The Collège must ensure that there is no confusion regarding the identity of any person practicing medicine in Québec.

In order to simplify this text, the masculine form has been used as a neutral form, and any reference to a professional includes candidates for medical practice as well as international medical graduates and members of the Collège.

## 2. Legal provisions respecting names in Québec

Under section 51 of the *Civil Code of Québec*, a person may have several given names. Accordingly, a person may choose to use one or more of the given names appearing on his birth certificate. Given names consisting of two parts linked by a hyphen are considered a single name, however, and may not be split.

Section 51 of the Civil Code likewise specifies that a person has only one surname, composed of not more than two parts taken from those which compose his parents’ surnames. A professional whose surname consists of two parts may not choose to identify himself with only one part. Even if the parts are not connected by a hyphen, they may not be dissociated and are considered a single surname.

In other words, in Québec, a person may receive several given (or first) names but only one surname (“last name”) which may, however, consist of a maximum of two parts.

## 3. Identity documents

Identity documents (IDs) are verified at the time of first registration with the Collège and when a change of name is requested.

At the time of registration with the Collège, the professional must provide two IDs. These documents, as well as the supporting documents to be provided when applying for a change of name, must be valid when they are submitted to the Collège and must be translated into French or English, where appropriate.

Generally, only two IDs are required for registration with the Collège. However, as will be explained later, a professional who has married outside Québec and wishes to register using the surname of his spouse must provide other supporting documents in addition to the IDs. Supporting documents are also required for certain types of name changes. All IDs and supporting documents submitted will be kept in the professional’s file. In addition, each ID must be sent to the Collège as a separate, complete and legible document.

The two IDs required for registration with the Collège are as follows.

### *First ID*

With respect to the first ID, the professional must provide his birth certificate or his passport, depending on his place of birth. This first ID must be a certified true copy.

Thus, a professional born in Canada must provide a certified true copy of his **birth certificate** issued by the Registrar of Civil Status.

Other professionals must provide a certified true copy of their **passport**. If they do not have a valid passport, the Collège accepts a certified true copy of their Canadian citizenship certificate.

### *Second ID*

The second ID must be different from the first one and the given names and surname that appear on it must be identical to the given names and surname registered with the Collège as the usual professional name (see section 4).

The second ID must be one of the following:

- Birth certificate;
- Passport;
- Canadian citizenship certificate (front and back);
- Permanent resident card (front and back);
- Driver's licence;
- Healthcare card;
- Military identity card;
- Certificate of Indian status;
- Work permit issued by Citizenship and Immigration Canada;
- Study permit issued by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

All IDs except birth certificate and passport must have been issued by a Canadian authority. Thus, a birth certificate from another country than Canada is accepted as second ID. Moreover, both French and Belgian national identity cards are considered as birth certificates.

## **4. Special rules governing the choice of given names and surname at the time of registration with the Collège**

At the time of first registration with the Collège, a professional must indicate all the given names and surnames appearing on the IDs accompanying his application. Moreover, he must indicate which of the given names and surnames appearing on the first ID are the given names and surname under which he wishes to practice medicine (the "usual professional name"). **This usual professional name must be identical to the one appearing on his second ID.**

The first ID constitutes the base from which the professional may choose one or more given names under which he wishes to practice medicine. In other words, the birth certificate or passport contains all the possible given names that a professional may select as his usual professional given name. Consequently, a professional may not choose to practice under a given name that does not appear on this first ID. He may choose one or several given names, but hyphenated given names may not be dissociated. In addition, the usual professional given name may not consist solely of one or several initials but may include initials in addition to one or several given names. Because the usual given name must be identical to the entry appearing on the second ID, the initials must appear on the second ID and must correspond to the first letter of given names appearing on the first ID. Finally, the given name selected for practicing the profession may not be a diminutive of a given name appearing on the first ID.

With respect to his usual professional surname, a professional can only have one, consisting of at most two parts. Although these parts cannot be dissociated, a hyphen is not obligatory. If however, the professional comes from a jurisdiction allowing several surnames, he must indicate, as his usual professional surname, the surname appearing on his second ID, which may consist of at most two parts.

A professional married outside Québec who wishes to register with the Collège under the surname of his spouse but has not changed his name in the register of civil status must provide proof of his use of this surname as a physician in another jurisdiction (permit to practice, specialist's certificate or certificate of professional conduct), proof of change of name (marriage certificate) and an ID issued under the surname of his spouse, which must be identical to his usual professional surname. The permit to practice, the specialist's certificate and the certificate of professional conduct issued under the spouse's surname in another jurisdiction do not constitute IDs, although they can be used as proof of the use of this name in the practice of the profession. In fact, the ID must be one of those appearing in the list above (Section 3), as it must be for all professionals requesting registration with the Collège.

A professional will practice the profession and be entered on the roll of the Order under the given names and surname he has indicated as his usual professional name.

## 5. Name-changing rules

A professional may modify the usual professional name under which he is registered with the Collège further to a name change, to the extent that this change is legally justified. Thus, this request must be in response to a name change in the register of civil status, a sex change or a change of matrimonial status. Moreover, even without having legally changed his name, a professional may apply to the Collège to choose a different usual professional given name from among the given names he already has.

The rules applicable to each type of name change request are set out in the subsections that follow. Generally, every name change request must be made in writing and be accompanied by an ID showing given names and a surname identical to the new usual professional name that the professional wishes to use in the Collège's databases. This ID must be one of those on the list given above (Section 3). Other supporting documents may be required, as appropriate. When a professional must provide a

certificate issued by the Registrar of Civil Status or a marriage or divorce certificate in support of his request, this document must be a certified true copy.

### *Choice of a new usual professional given name without a “legal” name change*

To make this type of name change with the Collège, only one document is required from a professional, i.e. an ID with the given names and surname identical to the new usual professional name he wishes to use.

A professional must send the Collège a written name change request and the new given name must be one of those entered on his birth certificate or his passport kept in his professional file.

### *Change of given name or surname in the register of civil status*

The Registrar of Civil Status can authorize a name change for serious reasons, such as when the name generally used does not correspond to the one appearing on the birth certificate, the name is of foreign origin or too difficult to pronounce or write in its original form or the name invites ridicule or has become infamous.

To make this type of name change with the Collège, two IDs are required from the professional: an ID with given names and surname identical to the new professional name he wishes to use as well as the change of name certificate issued by the Registrar of Civil Status.

A professional must submit his request for a name change to the Collège in writing.

### *Sex change*

To make this type of name change with the Collège, two IDs are required from a professional: an ID showing given names and surname identical to the new usual professional name he wishes to use and the change of sex designation certificate or the change of sex designation and name certificate issued by the Registrar or Civil Status.

A professional must submit his request for a name change to the Collège in writing.

### *Change of matrimonial status*

#### *A) Divorce*

A professional practicing under the surname of his spouse who obtains a divorce and wishes to change his usual professional surname may request a name change.

To proceed with a name change of this type with the Collège, two documents are required from the professional: an ID showing the given names and surname identical to the new usual professional name he wishes to use and the divorce certificate or court judgment.

A professional must submit his request for a name change to the Collège in writing.

## *B) Marriage*

Since 1981, people who marry in Québec have been obliged to retain their surname at birth. No change will therefore be made to the roll of the Order after the marriage in Québec of a professional registered with the Collège under his surname at birth, unless a change of name had been obtained from the Registrar of Civil Status.

A professional who marries and wishes to change his usual professional name with the Collège must provide, as appropriate, two or three documents.

If the professional had obtained a change of name from the Registrar of Civil Status, the rules indicated above in this respect apply. Thus, two documents are required: an ID using given names and surname identical to the new usual professional name he wishes to use (surname of spouse), as well as the change of name certificate issued by the Registrar of Civil Status.

If the professional had not obtained a change of name from the Registrar of Civil Status , the Collège cannot change the surname under which he is registered unless he provides three documents: an ID using given names and surname identical to the new usual professional name he wishes to use (spouse's surname), proof of the use of this surname as a physician in another jurisdiction (permit, specialist's certificate or certificate of professional conduct) and proof of the change of name (marriage certificate).

A professional must submit his request for a name change to the Collège in writing.