

Hints to make hockey season happy

Before hitting the ice this winter, young hockey players may need birth certificates as proof of age.

Many children's organizations and sports clubs, such as the Ontario Minor Hockey League, insist on verifying the ages of participants. As a result, when fall and winter registrations begin, parents often end up scrambling to apply for their children's birth certificates.

Requests for birth certificates flood into the Registrar General's office every year when hockey teams and other groups start organizing for the season. An even larger deluge occurs each spring when school registrations take place.

"To avoid last-minute panic, parents should apply for certificates as soon as possible," says Rosemarie Gage, Deputy Registrar General of Ontario for the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

Application forms for birth certificates are available at town halls and post office, but they must be mailed directly to the Registrar General's Toronto office.

If you can't find a form, simply write to "The Registrar General, Queen's Park, Parliament Buildings, Toronto, Ont., M7A 1Y5" and request a certificate. Be sure to list all pertinent information, including the names of both parents, the child's name, the place and date of birth and the reason the certificate is required.

A \$5 fee for each certificate must be paid upon application.

"It's really best to apply for birth certificates shortly after your children are born," says Gage. "But don't confuse registration of the birth with an application for a certificate."

By law, all births in Ontario must be registered within 30 days of the event.

The child's parents and the hospital involved must forward registration information on the birth to the local municipal clerk. The two reports are crosschecked, then forwarded to Gage's office.

Failure to register can result in a \$100 fine. The penalty for reporting false information is \$500 but fines for both offences are under review.

A certificate is a legal document confirming facts about the birth.

"A birth certificate is not required by law, but it is usually the basic document used to establish one's identity," says Gage.

"It can be difficult to get along without one. You might only make it as far as the child's first school year, although we do get requests for certificates for people of all ages."

In 1984, the Registrar General's office issued 319,605 birth certificates, yet only 133,612 babies were born that year.

The Registrar's office also records deaths, marriages, legal name changes, adoptions, divorces and still births.

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