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New rules allow individuals to change sex designation on birth certificates

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The Washington state Department of Health on Thursday announced a new rule that allows individuals to change the sex designation on their birth certificate.

The rule, which takes effect Jan. 27, adds “X” as an approved nonbinary option for individuals who don’t identify as strictly male or female, and allows individuals to change their gender identity to the category with which they identify.

It also removes a requirement for adults to get medical approval before changing their gender identification, and increases a list of licensed health care professionals that can attest to a gender change for minors, according to a Washington state Department of Health news release.

The rule defines “X” as a gender that’s not exclusively male or female and includes intersex, agender, amalgagender, androgynous, bigender, demigender, female-to-male, genderfluid, genderqueer, male-to-female, neutrois, nonbinary, pangender, third sex, transgender, transsexual, Two Spirit and unspecified.

Changing social norms were the driving force behind the introduction of the new rule, said David Johnson, spokesman for the Washington state Department of Health.

Both California and Oregon have passed similar rules allowing individuals to select a nonbinary – or gender X – identity on their birth certificates.

“We see that allowing a designated change means that people are less likely to be challenged when presenting their birth certificate as proof of identification,” Johnson said.

The Washington state Department of Health held a hearing in December on the proposed rule and received more than 1,000 comments both for and against the change.

The department compiled all comments on the rule change and presented them to John Weisman, the department’s secretary of health.

“We determined having the rule improved health equity in Washington,” Johnson said.

Adults can request a change to their birth certificate by filling out a form, providing a copy of the original birth certificate and having it notarized.

For minors who want to change their gender designation, it is required that they have written consent from a parent or guardian and a signed statement from a licensed health care professional treating the minor in addition to the notarized form.

The rule applies only to amendments made to a birth certificate after the record is completed at time of birth.

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