

APPENDIX C:

ACCESS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECORDS: A SHORT LIST

Often researchers ask about access to Minnesota local government records, and while most records are open to the public, a few records have restricted access because of state and federal laws. Below is a brief listing of local government records that are popular with researchers, especially for family history research. The list indicates whether or not specific records are open to the public, and the Minnesota local government office of origin. Some, but not all, of the below listed records may be available in the office of origin and/or the State Archives of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Adoption Files. These files are closed for 100 years from the date of the granting of the adoption decree. Files over 100 years old are open. Those wishing to see adoption records less than 100 years old must first obtain a court order from the jurisdiction in which the adoption was filed. These files are often kept with the civil case files of the District Court. Office of origin: District Court. (Legal citation: M.S. 259.79¹).

Birth Records. These records are generally closed unless they are over 100 years old or do not pertain to adoptions and out-of-wedlock births. Office of origin: City and township until 1953; and County Vital Statistics Registrar. (Legal citation: M.S. 144.225²).

Civil Case Files. These files are open except for those pertaining to adoptions (see above). Office of origin: District Court.

Criminal Case Files. These files are open except for those cases that have been closed by the District Court. Office of origin: District Court.

Death Records. These records are open. Office of origin: City and township until 1953; and County Vital Statistics Registrar.

Divorce Records. These records are open and are often filed with the civil case files of the District Court. Office of origin: District Court.

Insanity Records. Records that are less than 75 years old contain non-public data. Office of origin: District Court.

Land Records. All land records are open. Office of origin: County Recorder.

¹ Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes. *2009 Minnesota Statutes: Chapter 259.79 Adoption Records*. 2009. <https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/statutes/?id=259.79>

² Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes. *2009 Minnesota Statutes: Chapter 144.225: Disclosure of Information from Vital Records*. 2009. <https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/statutes/?id=144.225>

Jail Registers. These registers are open. Office of origin: County Sheriff or Municipal Police Department.

Juvenile Records. These records are closed to the public. Those wishing to see juvenile records must obtain a court order from the jurisdiction in which the juvenile action was filed. Office of origin: District Court. (Legal citation: M.S. 260B.171³).

Marriage Records. All marriage records are open. Office of origin: County Vital Statistics Registrar.

Naturalization Records. All naturalization records are open. Office of origin: District Court.

Probate Case Files. All probate case files are open except for those cases that have been closed by the District Court. Office of origin: District Court.

School Records. All student record cards or records of individual grades are restricted. They are open to the student with proof of identification, such as a driver's license or identification card. These records are open to all others 30 years after their creation *and* 10 years after the student's death (the death must be proven). Office of origin: Elementary and secondary schools.

Tax Records. All tax records, such as tax lists and assessment rolls, are open. Office of origin: County Auditor and County Assessor.

³ Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes. *2009 Minnesota Statutes: Chapter 260B.171: Records.* 2009
<https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/statutes/?id=260B.171>