



Important Information About Life Partnership

If you and your partner are of the same-sex or same-gender identity and in a long-term committed relationship, you can have your relationship officially recognized by the City of Philadelphia by becoming Life Partners. Life Partnership gives couples certain rights and benefits that are available to opposite-sex married couples and their dependents/ families. These benefits include being able to:

- Designate your Life Partner as a dependent to receive health benefits under the City of Philadelphia's employee benefit plan and certain other employee benefit plans
- Make your Life Partner a beneficiary under the City's retirement plan, if you are a City of Philadelphia employee
- Transfer property to your Life Partner without having to pay City real estate transfer tax, if you live in Philadelphia

It is important to note that **Life Partnership does not provide all of the rights and benefits available to opposite-sex married couples and their dependents/children.** For example, your Life Partner will not automatically have the right to make certain financial and medical decisions for you. In addition, if either you or your Life Partner is the biological or legal parent of a minor child, additional steps must be taken to establish the parental rights of the non-biological or non-legal parent.

In order to obtain these additional rights, you should consider taking additional legal steps after you register your Life Partnership with the City of Philadelphia.

Establishing Relationship Rights with Your Life Partner

Below is a list of legal documents and court proceedings that you should consider to establish additional rights with your Life Partner:

- Statement of Contrary Intent to Designate Life Partner to Determine the Final Disposition of Remains. By completing the attached Optional Statement of Statement of Contrary Intent to Designate Life Partner to Determine the Final Disposition of Remains, you can designate your Life Partner to handle your funeral arrangements after your death.
- Durable Power of Attorney for Finances. With this document, you can designate your Life Partner to handle your finances if you are sick or injured and unable to make financial decisions for yourself.
- Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care (also known as a Health Care Proxy). With this document, you can designate your Life Partner to advocate for your care, consult with your doctors about your care and decide your course of medical treatment if you get sick or injured and are unable to make health care decisions for yourself.



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- Last Will and Testament (also known as a Will). A Will states your wishes for your property after your death. By creating a Will, you designate your Life Partner to handle your assets and debts, receive or distribute your property, take care of your minor children and receive any other rights that you currently have.
- Living Will. This is a document in which you state the medical treatment and life-prolonging measures you do and do not want taken if you are in the final stages of a terminal illness or are in a persistent vegetative state.
- Standby Guardianship Designation. This document allows you to name your Life Partner to care for your child if you become terminally ill or incapacitated.
- Cohabitation Agreement (also known as a Domestic Partnership Agreement). With this document, you and your Life Partner can state the financial responsibilities and obligations you make to each other, both during the relationship and in the event that you separate.
- Real Estate Agreement. This document explains the financial and property rights you and your Life Partner have with respect to a particular piece of real estate.
- Mental Health Power of Attorney. This document allows you to designate your Life Partner to make certain decisions for you about mental health care. It also allows you to make decisions in advance about the types of mental health treatment you want to receive if you become incapable of making mental health care decisions for yourself.
- Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA) Authorizations. By executing a HIPAA authorization, you can grant your Life Partner access to certain health information that is considered protected by federal law.

To Establish Relationship Rights with a Minor Child

If either you or your Life Partner is the biological or legal parent of a minor child, below is a list of legal documents and court proceedings that will establish legal rights between the child and the Life Partner of the child's parent:

- Second-Parent Adoption. Second-parent adoption makes it possible for a non-biological or legal parent to legally establish parental rights with a child. A court order is needed to establish a second-parent adoption.
- Co-Parenting Agreement. If you and your Life Partner have not gone through second parent adoption proceedings, you can document each of your rights and responsibilities as parents in a Co-Parenting Agreement. However, because Co-Parenting Agreements are not court-ordered documents, a couple in Pennsylvania with a Co-Parenting



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Agreement should still consider going through Second-Parent Adoption proceedings.

- Medical Consent Authorization. This document allows you or your Life Partner to make necessary medical or mental health decisions for the child when the biological or legal parent of the child is not present.

All of the legal documents and proceedings described above can be complicated, so you should consider having an attorney help you through the process. There are a number of private attorneys that specialize in these areas of law, particularly for the LGBT community, and can provide these services for a fee, sometimes on a sliding-scale basis, based on your income. For help finding an attorney, you can contact:

Philadelphia Bar Association Lawyer Referral and Information Service
(215) 238-6333
www.philadelphiabarlawyers.com

Mazzoni Center Legal Services
21 South 12th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 563-0657
1-866-LGBT-LAW
mazzonicenter.org

Mazzoni Center provides free legal services to low-income individuals and can assist individuals who are not low-income in finding an attorney.