

SECRETARY of STATE

Ralph Munro



ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY PROGRAM

PO Box 257
Olympia, WA 98507-0257
360/753-2972
1-800-822-1065
TDD 1-800-664-9677

SUMMARY OF THE PROGRAM: The Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) provides services to residents of Washington State. It began in 1991 and is administered by the Office of the Secretary of State. Laws governing the ACP are found in Chapter 40.24 RCW. Rules for the program's operation are in Chapter 434-840 WAC. The goal of the Address Confidentiality Program is to help sexual assault and domestic violence victims keep their relocation secret. The former victim must be Washington State resident who has recently relocated and whose new location is unknown to the offender.

The ACP offers two service components. Each helps keep the victim's new location secret in a different way. One part allows use of a substitute mailing address. Through use of this address, participants receive cost-free, security mail forwarding. The Secretary of State serves as each client's legal agent for receipt of mail and service of process. Another part of the program prevents public access to information about ACP clients in certain government records.

THE ACP SUBSTITUTE ADDRESS: Each ACP participant is assigned a substitute address. The ACP substitute address has no relation to a participant's actual location. Many program clients may be assigned the same substitute address. The ACP address includes a street address, an ACP identification code, a post office box, Washington city, and zip code. ACP participants' mail must be addressed and delivered to the post office box. Mail cannot be received at the ACP street address.

Clients who use the substitute address have first-class mail forwarded to their actual location. For obvious security reasons, ACP does not handle packages regardless of size or type of mailing. Though there may be some time loss in transit of mail, participants have increased security by keeping their actual location confidential from mail senders. An individual's participation in the ACP and the substitute address assigned to them, are not confidential information. However, a program participant's actual location is confidential. Using the substitute address helps to keep a participant's real location secret.

Program participants are given ACP identification cards. An ACP identification card includes a participant's name, signature, birthdate, ACP code number, and ACP substitute address. Program participants may use the ACP address when creating records with state and local agencies. For example, the substitute address may be used by an ACP client in applying for a driver's license instead of revealing the client's actual residential location.

Program participants choose when to use the substitute address. They decide when and to whom they will reveal their actual address, keep their location secret, and make use of their ACP substitute address. When an ACP participant chooses to reveal actual address information to an agency, the agency is not legally obligated to keep that information confidential. There is one exception, and that comprises the second service component discussed later in this document. State and local agencies must accept the ACP substitute address as though it is a person's actual residential address when an ACP client presents their identification card.

Substitute Address Continued: In unusual situations, an agency may get a substitute address use exemption. This exemption determination must be made by the Secretary of State. If an agency is granted an ACP exemption, ACP participants who are involved with that agency may be required to reveal their actual location. To date, the program has granted one exemption to criminal justice system agencies involved with the community supervision of released offenders and registered sexual predators.

Courts of law may demand actual address information from ACP participants. Federal agencies and private businesses may help ACP clients by allowing them to use their substitute address. They may do this, although there is no legal obligation for them to do so. Many agencies and businesses use the ACP substitute address and adjust their records on ACP participants without difficulty.

Some government services or benefits depend on where a person lives. The ACP helps its clients meet the requirements for these services and benefits by working with state and local agencies to meet client needs without releasing actual address information.

ACP PROTECTED RECORDS: A second component of the ACP involves voting and marriage records. The ACP Protected Records program provides complete confidentiality for these two kinds of government records. An ACP participant must specifically request ACP Protected Records services from county government officials.

ACP participants who request this service receive security records handling from their county auditor's office, the Department of Health and the Office of the Secretary of State. In each of these agencies, only officially authorized personnel are allowed access to the participant's records. The identity of ACP participants with ACP Protected Records is maintained in secret.

APPLYING FOR ACP PARTICIPATION: The Address Confidentiality Program services residents of Washington State. An applicant must be a victim of sexual assault or domestic violence who has permanently and confidentially moved away from their abuser. Adults and their children can participate in the program. There is no application or participation fee. Participants complete applications in person at a community-based victims assistance program. ACP staff will make a referral to a local program that provides ACP application assistance. These programs accessible throughout the state. The application process involves meeting with a victim's application counselor and receiving orientation information about the program. Application Assistants forward completed applications to the ACP office in Olympia. The ACP office reviews applications and certifies participants. Each participant is assigned an ACP substitute address, assigned an authorization code number, and issued an ACP identification card.

HOW TO CONTACT THE ACP: If you have any questions about the ACP, please call our toll-free number inside Washington at 1-800-822-1065 or 1-800-664-9677 TTY. Outside Washington call 1-360-753-2972. You may direct written questions or requests for more information to: Address Confidentiality Program, P.O. Box 257, Olympia, WA 98507-0257.