

Authenticating U.S. Documents

Documents issued in one country which need to be used in another country must be “authenticated,” or “legalized,” before they can be recognized as valid. Authentication occurs when a competent authority confirms the authenticity of a document issued by another authority. **Our consular officers can authenticate the seal of the U.S. Department of State, but CAN NOT authenticate documents such as powers of attorney, affidavits, birth, death and marriage records, incorporation papers, deeds, patent applications, home studies, and other legal papers, which are often executed and notarized by local, state, or other federal authorities.**

You will need to do the following in order to authenticate your documents.

I. Documents Issued by Federal Agencies: Documents issued under the seal of a federal agency can be authenticated by the U.S. Department of State Authentications Office: 600 19th Street, NW Washington, DC. 20006, Tel. **202-485-8000**. After this is completed, documents can be brought to the foreign embassy or consulate in the United States.

II. State Documents: Documents originating within a State (i.e. Birth, Death, Marriage), must be authenticated by the appropriate state office, normally the State Secretary of State's office. Once the state authenticates the document, only then can it be authenticated by the U.S. Department of State Authentications Office as explained above. Documents may then be authenticated by the foreign embassy or consulate in the United States.

III. Notarized Documents: The procedure for authenticating documents executed before a notary public, such as affidavits or acknowledgments, varies from state to state. You should contact the state authentication authority on the website listed below to learn what steps are necessary to authenticate the notary's seal. In some states, you may have to contact the court county clerk where the notary is licensed to have the notary's seal authenticated. The state Secretary of State's office can then authenticate the seal of the clerk of the county court. After the seal of the state Secretary of State or comparable authority listed confirms the authenticity of the notary's seal, the document then can be authenticated by the U.S. Department of State Authentications Office. The final step is to obtain the seal of the foreign embassy or consulate in the United States.

IV. U.S. Academic Records: To authenticate school, or university records, you must obtain from the school or university registrar an official copy of the record that bears the seal of the school or university. The registrar should then execute an affidavit attesting to the validity of the document before a notary public (there is usually a notary public in the registrar's office or at the school). The steps for authenticating the notary's seal outlined earlier should then be followed. Finally, school records can be authenticated by the foreign embassy or consulate in Washington D.C.

Documents can be authenticated by the U.S. Department of State, Authentications Office, by following instructions on the following website:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/travel-legal-considerations/internal-judicial-asst/authentications-and-apostilles/authentication-certificate-requirements.html>

For more information about authentications, as well as the proper authorities to contact in please visit your state secretary website.

U.S. Embassy, Addis Ababa

Physical Address:

Office of Authentications
U.S. Department of State
600 19th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

Mailing Address:

Office of Authentications
U.S. Department of State
CA/PPT/S/TO/AUT
44132 Mercure CIR PO BOX 1206 Sterling, VA 20166 1206

Note: Effective October 6, 2014, all express mail air bill labels sent to the Office of Authentications for the use of returning documents must reflect the customer's mailing address as both the sender and recipient.

Telephone: 202-485-8000

To inquire about the status of your documents, please call the Office of Authentications:

Phone: 202-485-8000

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. *and*
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. EST
Monday through Friday

When calling for a telephone inquiry, you must indicate whether a request form DS-4194 (PDF version) was submitted and provide the following:

- * Full name and/or name of company
- * Type of document(s)
- * Country of use
- * Number of document(s)
- * Complete return address
- * Type of mail service used to return the document(s) if applicable; include tracking number
- * Type of payment submitted

Schedule an Appointment

To schedule an appointment or speak with an Authentications Specialist, please call the Office of Authentications:

Phone: 202-485-8000

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. *and*
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. EST
Monday through Friday

Appointment Services: Note: All Federal Holidays are excluded.

10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. *and*
2:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Monday through Friday