

IDENTITY DOCUMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS



Refugee and Migrant Rights Programme,
Statelessness Project

What is an Identity Document and why is it important?

An identity document ("ID") is a compulsory document issued to South African citizens and permanent residents who are 16 years of age (IDs are also issued to refugees through the Refugee Reception Office).

An ID enables you to identify yourself when dealing with public and private institutions and is required for multiple day-to-day activities including:

- applying for a passport
- applying for a visa (travel or work visas)
- applying for a driver's license
- applying for a job
- registering to vote in elections
- accessing other basic human rights and services e.g. social assistance, housing, education and healthcare

Many online facilities or transactions will also require you to provide positive identification.

NB: For children of South African citizens, the birth certificate must be issued with an identity number and their details are entered into the National Population Register. This identity number will be used to issue the ID.

Where and how do you apply for an Identity Document?

Applications for IDs for South African citizens and permanent residents are made at the nearest Department of Home Affairs local office or South African mission or consulate abroad, free of charge. (South African citizens born in South Africa can also apply for a Smart ID Card online: <https://ehome.dha.gov.za/ehomeaffairs>)

First time applicants will need to submit the following:

- application form (DHA-9 available at the office)
- certified copy of birth certificate/ reference book / Transkei, Bophutatswana, Venda or Ciskei identity or travel documents
- certified copy of parents' IDs and other documents relevant to their South African citizenship
- two identical colour ID photos (NB: if the office is using the new biometric system for smart cards, the photos will be taken digitally but photos are still needed for a temporary ID)
- fingerprints to be taken at the office and imprinted on the
- application form

If you are a naturalised citizen or a permanent resident you must also attach the following:

- naturalisation certificate + copy (to be certified by the Department of Home Affairs)
- permanent residency certificate + copy (to be certified by the Department of Home Affairs)
- exemption permit + copy (to be certified by the Department of Home Affairs)

If any of the above documents are lost, you must first apply for duplicates before applying for an ID.

When will you get your ID?

All applications are sent to the Department of Home Affairs head office in Pretoria for processing. Once finalised, your ID will be forwarded to the office at which the application was submitted for collection. Make sure to provide accurate contact details for updates.

A temporary ID can be issued at a fee while you wait for your ID. Further, take note of the following:

- any errors in your ID will be corrected free of charge
- any amendments to your ID details can be done at a fee (e.g. surname or gender)
- if your ID is lost, stolen or damaged you can apply for a re-issued ID at a fee

What do you do if your identity number is "blocked" or "marked" by the Department of Home Affairs?

1. approach the nearest Department of Home Affairs local office
2. the immigration officer will do an online fingerprint verification in order to check on the system why the ID has been blocked/marked
3. the immigration officer will then tell you what you need to submit as proof of citizenship in order to have block marker removed
4. the immigration officer will hold an interview with the affected person and compile a report which is forwarded to the head office
5. the head office will analyse the report and make a decision
6. the turnaround time for resolving the issue of a blocked marked ID will depend on the reason why the ID has been blocked/marked and the kind of information the affected

person has to submit (the immigration officer should be able to advise the affected person how long the process will take)

What type of documents will you need to have the block or marker removed?

- certified copy of birth certificate
- birth records (clinic card or maternity certificate)
- baptismal and school records
- copies of both parents' IDs and other documents relevant to their South African citizenship
- testimonials or DNA tests etc.

Where do you get further information on IDs?

For any additional information visit: www.dha.gov.za

Where can you get further legal advice or assistance?

If the Department of Home Affairs refuses to assist you with a service, you are entitled to request written reasons for the refusal and to submit a written complaint to the manager of the relevant local office or to the Head Office. If the situation remains unresolved, you can seek legal advice from a lawyer. The following organisations can provide legal advice and assistance:



For legal assistance contact:

Lawyers for Human Rights (JHB)

☎ 011 339 1960
🌐 www.lhr.org.za

Scalabrini Centre (Cape Town)

☎ 021 465 6433
✉ info@scalabrini.org.za

Legal Resources Centre (JHB)

☎ 011 836 9831
✉ info@lrc.org.za

Probono.Org (JHB)

☎ 011 339 6080
✉ info@probono.org.za