

Apostille or Authentication of Documents

In short, the apostille is a verification of notarizing authorities' identities. You should determine whether the apostille is "suggested" or "required" by the agency requesting your information. The following information is from the U.S. Department of State website. Additional information can be found at <http://www.state.gov/m/a/auth/>

Apostille Information

Since October 15, 1981, the United States has been part of the [1961 Hague Convention](#) abolishing the Requirement of Legalization for Foreign Public Documents. The Convention provides for the simplified certification of public (including notarized) documents to be used in countries that have joined the convention. Documents destined for use in participating countries and their territories should be certified by one of the officials in the jurisdiction in which the document has been executed. Said official must have been designated as competent to issue certifications by "apostille" (usually in the office of the State Secretary of State of his/her counterpart) as provided for by the 1961 Hague Convention. The text of the Convention may be found in T.I.A.S. 10072; 33 U.S. Treaty Series (UST) 883; 527 U.N. Treaty Series (UNTS) 189, and Martindale-Hubble International Law Digest.

With this certification by the Hague Convention apostille, the document is entitled to recognition in the country of intended use, and no certification by the Authentications Office or legalization by the embassy or consulate of the foreign country where the document is to be used is required. The Authentications Office only certify to documents from other federal agencies and officials from foreign governments with the apostille.

Office of Authentications

The Department of State, Authentications Office is responsible for signing and issuing certificates under the Seal of the U.S. Department of State (22 CFR, Part 131) providing authentication services to U.S. citizens and foreign nationals on documents that will be used overseas. This office receives a variety of documents from commercial organizations, private citizens, and officials of the Federal and State governments. Documents include but not limited to: company bylaws, powers of attorney, trademarks, diplomas, transcripts, distributorship agreements, articles of incorporation, good standing certificates, home studies, letters of reference etc. It also ensures that the requested information will serve in the interest of justice and is not contrary to U.S. policy.

Authentications Requirements

Required Certification for:

General Documents

Note: *All seals and signatures must be originals and all dates must follow in chronological order.*

Diplomas, Power-of-Attorney, Agreements, Bylaws, Transcripts, Deeds of Assignments, etc.

1. Acknowledged before a notary public;
2. Certified by the clerk of court of the county in which the notary is commissioned;¹

3. Certified by the Secretary of State of the State in which the document is executed.

¹Item 2 may be omitted if the authority in item 3 will certify directly to the notary

All documents in a foreign language must be accompanied with a certified (notarized) English translation. If a copy of a document is used, it must include the statement that is a true and accurate copy.

State and Local Documents and Court Records

Note: *Certified originals:* Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates and Court Files (Divorce Decrees, Probate Will, Judgments etc.)

1. Certified by the custodial of those records;
2. Certified by the Secretary of State of the State in which the documents are recorded. The Secretary of State should be requested to certify to the officials signing the document under the impressed Seal of the State.

Animal Health Certificates

1. Certified under the official Seal of the U. S. Department of Agriculture in the State in which the document originates. (Original Official Signature required)

Fees

The authentication fee is \$7.00 per document. A personal/company check or money order made payable to the U.S. Department of State must be submitted with document. Visa and Mastercard are accepted for Walk-in Service only.

Mail Service

The Authentication of documents takes approximately 5 business days to process from the time of receipt**. Please include a cover-letter ([see example](#)) with your name, telephone number, address and email address. Please indicate the name of the country where the document will be used. We suggest using a self-addressed stamped envelope for faster return of your documents. Documents received without a return envelope and postage will be returned through the State Department regular mail, which can result in a 2-3 week delay. You can use DHL, Fed/Ex, UPS and express mail services for faster receipt/return of your documents. However, you must enclose a prepaid airbill and envelope.

Mailing Address

U.S. Department of State
Authentications Office
518 23rd Street, N.W. SA-1
Washington, D.C. 20520

** U.S. Postal mail entering the U.S. Department of State must go through a screening process which may delay the time in which we will receive the document.

The Authentication Office will mail documents directly to the Foreign Embassy or Consulates if provided with a transmittal letter, fee, and a pre-addressed stamped envelope. Please enclose an additional pre-addressed stamped envelope for the embassy or consulate to return the document.

Walk-in (Counter Service)

Open - 7:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Only
Monday thru Friday except Federal Holidays

Each customer (company) is limited to 15 documents per day on a while-you-wait basis.

Location

Authentications Office Columbia Plaza Store Front
518 23rd Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Due to the high volume of requests, we are not able to answer phone inquiries. For the fastest response to your questions, we recommend contacting the office via email. We recommend contacting the office via email, you will receive a response within a 24 hour period or the next business day. You may also fax inquiries to our office. Fax: 202-663-3636

Email: aoprgsmauth@state.gov

Phone: 202-647-5002 (Recorded message with office hours, location, and fee schedule.)

TDD 202-663-3468 (For the hearing-impaired)

The Suffolk County Clerk's Office is open 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for holidays. The cost of authentication is \$3.00 per document. You may contact the County Clerk:

Suffolk County Clerk
310 Center Drive
Riverhead, NY 11901-3392 (tel. 631 852-2000)
www.suffolkcountyny.gov/clerk

The New York State Department of State is open from 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. from Monday – Friday, except for holidays. There is a \$10 fee. You may contact the NYS Dept of State::

New York Department of State – Certification Unit
123 William Street, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10038 (tel. 212 417-5684)

Professional firms may also have your documents authenticated for a nominal fee. Simply search apostille or authentication of documents using the Internet.