

YOUR WORKING CHECKLIST

State versus federal document authentication routes

How do I distinguish state, federal agency and court records for authentication?

Classify the issuing authority before choosing an authentication office. U.S. state records, federal agency documents and federal court documents can have different competent authorities; a notarized copy does not automatically erase that distinction.

Check the boxes on screen or by hand. Use the notes area for records to find and questions to ask.

Your preparation checklist

- ☐ Identify actual issuer and public signature
- ☐ Separate agency and court categories
- ☐ Check accepted original or certified-copy form
- ☐ Use the designated official request route

Notes and questions to follow up

Source links and current instructions

Sources checked October 25, 2026. Follow current instructions at the linked institution.

HCCH: Apostille competent authorities

<https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/authorities1/?cid=41>

USAGov: Authenticate an official document for use outside the U.S.

<https://www.usa.gov/authenticate-us-document>

California Secretary of State: Apostille frequently asked questions

<https://www.sos.ca.gov/notary/apostille-faqs>

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<https://immigrantinsider.com/documents/state-versus-federal-authentication/>

General information

This free organizer is not a government form and does not submit an application, establish eligibility, preserve a deadline or replace individual legal advice. Government filing fees and professional services are separate.