



What's in a Name?

By Mary Ellen McMahon

Getting married or divorced and looking to change your last name or hyphenate your existing name? In my practice I have found that when people neglect to legally update official documents with their new name, they are more likely to run into continuity of benefits issues when trying to obtain government services like Medicare and Social Security. It can get complicated and very time consuming to have to prove you are entitled to those benefits, especially when government agencies do not have consistent information about you.

A word of advice: whatever name you choose, I suggest you maintain consistency after the change, for example, if your name is Mary Smith and you decide to change it to Mary Smith-Jones, make sure you use Smith-Jones when obtaining a driver's license, medical insurance or in any other official transactions. Resist the temptation to use Smith in some cases and Smith-Jones in others, it will likely save you time and plenty of aggravation.