

Ask the U.S. Embassy

April 17, 2013

My half-brother in the United States is planning to file an immigration petition for me. We have the same father, although our father's name was not listed on my birth certificate because he was not at the hospital when I was born. I assume that I should have my father's name added to my birth certificate before I begin the visa application process, but is there anything else I must do?

In order for you to obtain for an immigrant visa, you and your brother must provide convincing evidence that you share the same father. Simply adding your father's name to your birth certificate now – decades after you were born – may not be sufficient proof that you and your brother are related to one another.

Many individuals submit written affidavits from other relatives and friends stating that a biological relationship exists between a parent and child. In general, U.S. Embassy Kingston does not find these affidavits helpful. The individuals submitting affidavits are usually eager to see their relative or friend move to the United States, so their statements cannot be considered an unbiased source of information.

Before your visa interview, you should review your records to gather documentary evidence of your relationship with your father, such as old baptismal records, school records, medical records, or photos of you with your father. Recent documents or photos generally will not help you prove your relationship.

Unfortunately, many applicants in your position have very few historic records that clearly demonstrate a paternal relationship. In such cases, the consular section will suggest DNA testing when the intending immigrant visits the Embassy for a visa interview. Applicants must follow the Embassy's guidelines for DNA testing; test results from unauthorized laboratories will not be accepted.

The immigrant visa application process likely would have been much simpler for you if your father's name had been listed on your original birth certificate. The Consular Section encourages all parents to ensure their children's vital records and other official documents are complete and well-maintained in case their children eventually wish to move to the United States.

