

NOTARIZATION CHECKLIST

IDENTIFY THE NAMED PRINCIPAL SIGNER

The notary must be able to identify the person whose signature is being notarized. Identification can be achieved through:

- Personal knowledge of the signer (where allowed).
- Satisfactory identification credential.
- The use of one or two credible witnesses (where allowed).

All identification methods must conform to the notary's commissioning state law.

CONFIRM AWARENESS AND WILLINGNESS

The notary must ensure that the signer appears aware and willing to have their signature notarized. Never notarize the signature of someone who seems confused, unresponsive, or urged to sign against their will.

DETERMINE THE TYPE OF NOTARIAL ACT

Notaries should remember that their notary commission does not grant them the authority to provide legal advice. Unless they are also licensed attorneys, notaries cannot advise customers which notarial act should be performed. If the document does not indicate the notarial act required, the notary has two options:

- Explain each available notarial act and let the client choose.
- Advise the client to contact the party relying on the document, or an attorney, for clarification.

CALCULATE THE NUMBER OF NOTARIAL ACTS

If the document requires more than one notarial act to be performed, the notary may charge a fee, as allowed by law, for each notarization performed.

EXAMINE THE DOCUMENT

Before notarizing, thoroughly examine the document for several key factors:

- the document appears complete with all pages, and there are no blanks that should be completed prior to notarization;
- there are no post-dated signatures on the document;
- the person named as the signer of the document is personally present;
- if the document is already signed, that the notarial act is an acknowledgment, not an oath/affirmation (otherwise, it must be signed again in your presence);
- and, that the notarial certificate is for an act you may perform; its wording substantially complies with state law, and all the notarial certificate wording is contained on the same page.

This examination also allows you to accurately describe the document and notarial act in your record book (journal) entry.

DISCUSS FEES

Before performing the notarial act, inform the customer of any fees you intend to charge. If travel costs are involved, disclose them in advance and itemize them separately from the cost of the notarial act.

COMPLETE THE STEPS FOR A NOTARIAL ACT

Now, you may proceed with notarizing the person's signature. Require the individual's personal appearance, verify their identification, be assured the signer understands the document contents, seems competent, and appears willing to have their signature notarized, and complete all notarization steps.