

# The Most Common Types Of Notarizations

By Kelle Clarke on August 13, 2015 in [Notary News](#)

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*Updated 7-1-19.* Although Notaries are forbidden to choose the type of notarization for a signer, you need to know the difference between common notarial acts in order to perform your duties properly.

## Acknowledgments

The purpose of an [acknowledgment](#) is to ensure that the signer of a document is who they claim to be and has voluntarily signed the document. Acknowledgments often are needed for documents concerning valuable assets, such as deeds, mortgages and deeds of trust.

To perform an acknowledgment, the signer must personally appear before you at the time of notarization to be positively identified and to declare — or "acknowledge" — that the signature on the document is their own and that they signed willingly.

While it is common practice for your client to sign the document in front of you at the time of the notarization, it is not necessary. Your client may sign the document before bringing it to you and declare — or acknowledge — to you that the signature on the document is theirs.

## Jurats

The purpose of [a jurat](#) is for a signer to swear or affirm that the contents of a document are true. Depending on the jurisdiction, it also can be known as an affidavit or a verification on oath or affirmation.

For a jurat, the signer must personally appear before you and sign the document in your presence. You must then [administer an oath or affirmation](#) and have the signer speak aloud his or her promise that the statements in the document are true. The choice between an oath or affirmation should be made by the signer.

Administering the oath or affirmation is a vital part of performing a jurat or verification because the signer is affirming that the contents of the document are true, and he or she may be prosecuted for perjury if the contents are not true. **California** requires a signer to provide proof of identity for a jurat.

## Oaths/Affirmations

In some cases, a client may simply need you to administer an oath or affirmation orally, rather than as part of a jurat, affidavit or other written document. The purpose of administering a verbal oath or affirmation is, again, to compel a client to truthfulness.

An oath is a solemn pledge to a Supreme Being. An affirmation is a solemn pledge on the individual's personal honor. Again, the choice should be made by the signer.

## Copy Certification

A [copy certification](#) confirms that a reproduction of an original document is a full, true, and accurate transcription or reproduction of the original.

Documents requiring copy certification may include: diplomas, driver's licenses, leases, contracts, vehicle titles, Social Security cards, medical records and bills of sale.

To perform a copy certification, the person in possession of an original document (known also as the "document custodian") takes the original document to a Notary. The Notary typically will make a photocopy of the document and complete a certificate for the copy certification to confirm that the photocopy is a true, accurate and complete copy of the original.

While copy certifications are considered a common notarial act, nearly half of the U.S. states bar Notaries from performing this type of notarization. Make sure to check [your state's guidelines](#) to see if you may certify copies.

Of the states that do authorize this act, some stipulate that you may only certify copies of documents, not images, or other items. Other states allow Notaries to certify copies of both "records" and "items," such as graphs, maps or images. **California** only allows Notaries to certify copies of powers of attorney or the Notary's journal if requested by state officials or a court of law.

Many states, including **Florida** and **Texas**, also forbid the copy certification of vital, public documents, such as birth, death or marriage certificates. And as a general practice, the [Model Notary Act \(section 2-4\)](#) recommends against certifying copies of these types of documents. Certified copies of these documents may be obtained from the agency that holds the originals.

Under **new laws** taking effect September 1 this year in Texas and October 1 in **Montana**, Notaries in these two states will be allowed to certify that a physical copy of a notarized electronic record (such as a printed copy of an electronic document) is a true and correct copy.

## Signature Witnessing

Some states, such as **Colorado** and **Pennsylvania**, authorize Notaries to perform a [signature witnessing](#). With this notarial act, you certify that the individual appearing before you is who he or she claims to be, and the signature on the record is the signature of the individual before you.

The main difference between a signature witnessing and an acknowledgment is that you witness the document being signed. The main difference between a signature witnessing and a jurat, affidavit, or verification upon oath or affirmation is that, with a signature witnessing, you do not administer an oath.

*Want to brush up on your knowledge of notarizations and what is expected of you as a Notary Public? Check out the NNA's [Notary Essentials](#) course.*

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