

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-25-107045](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

Individuals can elect to change their legal names for various reasons, including marriage, divorce, or personal preference, and thousands of federal employees change their names every year. OPM instructs federal agencies to accept and process an employee's request for a name change due to marriage or court action on their personnel files.

GAO was asked to review the processes for federal employees to request changes to their names and genders on federal records. This report examines the extent to which selected agencies followed OPM's guidance from late 2023 through 2024 for name and gender changes. GAO selected four agencies for review—State, VA, IRS, and SSA—based on agency size and volume of public interaction. GAO reviewed OPM guidance and selected agencies' guidance and documentation. GAO also interviewed OPM officials and officials at each of the selected agencies. In addition, GAO held focus groups and interviews with employees who had experience with the name and gender change processes at each selected agency.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making six recommendations to the four selected agencies to develop comprehensive documentation that guides employees through all steps of the name change process and create a specific mechanism for collecting employee feedback on the whole process, as applicable.

IRS, SSA, and State plan to take actions. VA disagreed and GAO still believes further actions would improve employees' experiences.

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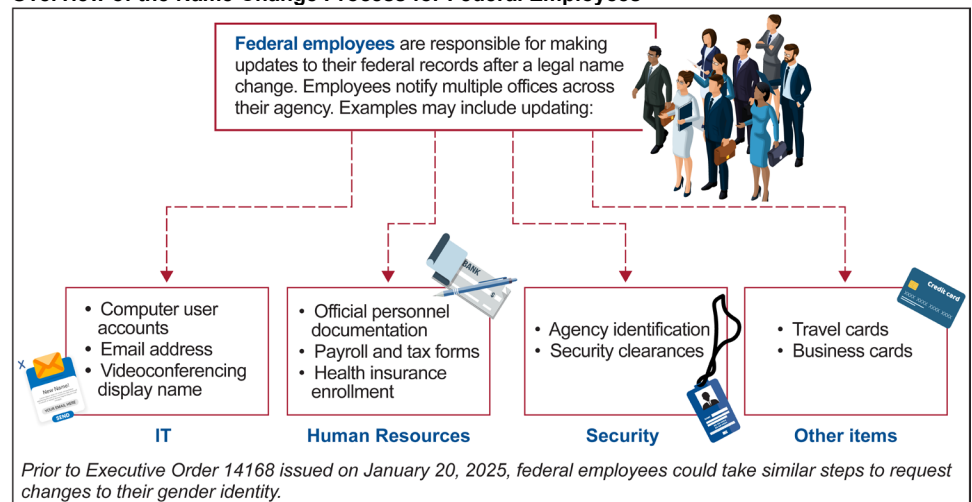
## FEDERAL WORKFORCE

### Selected Agencies Need to Improve Employee Name Change Process

## What GAO Found

GAO found that all four selected agencies had procedures for processing personnel actions for employees who legally changed their names in accordance with Office of Personnel Management (OPM) guidance from late 2023 to 2024. Three of the four selected agencies—Departments of State and Veterans Affairs (VA) and Social Security Administration (SSA)—also had procedures following OPM guidance in place at the time for processing gender identity changes to their employees' official personnel folders. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) officials stated that they did not receive requests to process gender changes to employees' official personnel folders.

### Overview of the Name Change Process for Federal Employees



Source: GAO analysis of agency information and elizaliv/ikiry GR/gheatza/alekselveprev/pandavector/StockVector/stock.adobe.com (graphics). | GAO-25-107045

Two of the four selected agencies—SSA and VA—lacked comprehensive guidance documenting an employee's responsibilities to effectively complete all the steps required to request a name change, including expected time frames. GAO asked employees at each of the selected agencies to describe their agency's guidance or resources for the name change process. Employees in all focus groups and nearly all interviews said they experienced challenges navigating their respective agency's name change processes due to the lack of guidance or insufficient guidance. Without comprehensive documentation that clearly communicates the process for completing name changes, federal employees' abilities to complete work tasks could be adversely affected.

Each of the selected agencies lacked systematic feedback mechanisms for capturing employee views on all portions of the name change process. Participants in nearly all focus groups described challenges navigating human resources, IT, or security steps, including unhelpful interactions with agency staff. Without a specific feedback mechanism to collect employees' views on the various process steps for changing their names, selected agencies are missing opportunities for improvement, such as addressing employee pain points.