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## Specialty License Plate Packet

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Montana Department of Justice  
Motor Vehicle Division  
P.O. Box 201430  
Helena, MT 59620-1430  
[mvdtitleinfo@mt.gov](mailto:mvdtitleinfo@mt.gov)

Revised May 2018

# Overview

This Specialty License Plate Packet provides you with information you need to know prior to applying for a specialty license plate through the Montana Department of Justice, Motor Vehicle Division (MVD).

Please read the information in this packet carefully and follow the instructions. If you have questions, contact the Department of Justice Specialty Plate Liaison at [mvdtitleinfo@mt.gov](mailto:mvdtitleinfo@mt.gov).

The guidelines and requirements for specialty plates are set forth in [Montana Code Annotated 61-3-472 through 61-3-481](#). There are requirements that must be met in order for the specialty plate to remain available to the public. If these are not met, the Department of Justice may revoke the sponsored plate.

## **This Specialty License Plate Packet provides:**

- A description of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Department of Corrections Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE) specialty license plate process
- Digital license plate design specifications
- Plate image stating requirements
- Organization Application to Sponsor a Specialty License Plate (Form MV115)
- Update Information for Sponsor of a Specialty License Plate (Form MV115A)
- Application to Change the Organization Name (Form MV115B)

## **WHEN DESIGNING YOUR PLATE**

### **Readability of the License Plate Number**

The main purpose of license plates is so that law enforcement officers and witnesses can quickly and accurately identify vehicles in the event of a traffic violation, crash, or other emergency.

Keeping this in mind, it is imperative to public and personal safety that the alphanumeric (AAA000) part of your organization's license plate design be very easy to read under multiple conditions, such as:

- from various distances
- at high speeds
- at a brief glance
- low light/darkness
- daytime and nighttime
- in inclement weather

As you design your plate, make sure the background behind the AAA000 is very light and not saturated with images.

### **Permission to Use Trademarked Designs**

It is also important that you make sure no element of your design contains or resembles material (e.g., an image, logo, or phrase) that is trademarked or otherwise protected by another organization.



# Specialty License Plate Application Process

Department of Justice (DOJ) and  
Department of Corrections (MCE)

Office Use Only

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1. An interested governmental body or nonprofit [501(c)(3)] organization may obtain the Organization Application to Sponsor a Specialty License Plate (Form MV115) from the Department of Justice, Motor Vehicle Division website at [dojmt.gov/driving/vehicle-title-registration-forms/](http://dojmt.gov/driving/vehicle-title-registration-forms/).
2. A governmental body or nonprofit organization must submit the following items to the mailing address shown above.
  - 1) Completed and signed Organization Application to Sponsor a Specialty License Plate (MV115)
  - 2) All supporting documentation listed on the application
  - 3) An electronic copy of the plate design in a layered format
  - 4) A full color hard copy of the plate design
  - 5) \$4,120 sponsor fee check **made payable to Montana Correctional Enterprises** (fee includes 3% administration fee per [MCA 61-3-111](#))
3. The Department of Justice (DOJ) will verify the application meets the requirements as outlined in [MCA 61-3-472 through 61-3-481](#) in order to be approved. Applications will be processed in the order they are received and the DOJ will contact each organization's liaison. The DOJ will send a copy of all approved applications to the Department of Corrections, Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE).
4. Organizations that need help designing and laying out the plate may contact MCE for assistance. Contact Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE) at (406) 846-1320 ext. 2535.
5. The DOJ, in consultation with MCE, will then approve or reject the initial plate design based on whether it meets the specifications outlined in this packet. The DOJ will return any design that is **not approved to the sponsor's liaison with information regarding the reasons for the disapproval**.
6. Once the initial or reworked plate design has been agreed upon between MCE and the DOJ, MCE will provide three identical proofs (samples) to DOJ for approval prior to producing the plates. The sponsor, DOJ, and Montana Highway Patrol must note the approval by signing the back of the proofs. Approved proofs will be retained by the DOJ and MCE.
7. If the organization has met all application requirements by the deadline of **March 1**, the newly-approved design will be released to County Treasurer offices for sale to the public no later than the last business day of July. If the deadline is met by **September 1**, the new design will be released to county treasurer offices no later than the last business day of January. The DOJ will notify the sponsor as to when the license plates will be available to the public.
8. Once approved for release, MCE will produce the organization's specialty license plates in quantities as determined by the DOJ. These plates may be available in County Treasurer offices and/or at the MVD's Title and Registration Bureau as determined by the DOJ.
9. **Customers can apply for plates directly through their County Treasurer's office.** A one-time administrative fee for all organization specialty license plates will be collected along with the standard vehicle registration fees and sponsor donation fees as determined by the organization for their specialty plate.

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10. Applications, graphic work, and production of the sponsor's specialty license plates will be processed in the order in which they are received and approved. Applications may take up to six weeks to process.
11. The Specialty License Plate Donations list (PDF) at [doj.mt.gov/driving](http://doj.mt.gov/driving), under [MVD by the Numbers](#), shows the quarterly and yearly total of donations collected for each sponsoring organization.

## Designated Design Areas Available for Specialty License Plates

Refer to the "Specialty License Plate Design Areas" diagram on MV117A in this packet.

1. "Montana" is printed in capital letters. Size of "Montana" is 1 inch high by 6 inches wide, and will be placed at least ¼ inch from the top of the plate to allow for rimming. "Montana" can be moved right or left in any combination within the bolt holes on the plate.
2. Alphanumeric characters will be located in a 2½ high by 8 ½ inch wide area, centered height-wise on the plate. The characters can be moved left or right in any combination, but must be at least 1¼ inch from either side of the plate.
3. License plate tabs are located on the bottom right side of the plate and are 1 ¼ inch high by 2 inches wide. Designs may be in this area, but the tabs will cover any design.

## Overall Design Areas

All areas not specified in items 1, 2, or 3 are available for design; however, any design that is in areas 1, 2, or 3 above must be light in color so as not to interfere with readability of the plate's alphanumeric identifier (AAA000) (See the Overview on page 1 of this packet).

## Updating Organization's Contact Information (Annual Requirement)

It is important for the public and the Department of Justice to be able to contact your association. **With this in mind, please keep your organization's contact information current.** On a yearly basis, review all contact information featured on the Motor Vehicle Division website at <https://dojmt.gov/driving/plate-designs-and-fees/>.

If updates are needed, list them on Form MV115A Update Information for Sponsor of a Specialty License Plate. The form is available from the Department of Justice, Motor Vehicle Division website at <https://dojmt.gov/driving/vehicle-title-registration-forms/>. The form may also be requested from the Department of Justice, Motor Vehicle Division, P.O. Box 201430, Helena MT 59620-1430, Attn: Specialty Plate Liaison. Return the completed form to the above address.

If all information is current and updates are not needed, note that on Form MV115A and return the form to the above address.



# Digital License Plate Design Specifications

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Only

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**This document outlines the artwork, design, production, and submission requirements for customers who want to design a 3M TCM digital graphic license plate.**

## Printing Process

The digital license plate printing process will provide the designer with a better understanding of the purpose of the 3M TCM design specifications. The digital license plate printing process is unique and requires different design specifications than those used in conventional printing.

### Medium

All 3M digital license plates are printed on reflective sheeting that is covered with tiny glass reflective beads. The sheeting is not as stable as paper and stretching may occur. This sheeting also has some limits in thermal transfer graphic printing due to the high heat required to transfer the media to the sheeting.

### Registration

Registration of each of the four color stations is plus or minus 2 mils (.002) per color. The sheeting has a tick mark used for printer registration. The printer uses a Top-of-Form (TOF) sensor to read the tick mark and locate the graphic. The registration of the printer to the tick mark is plus or minus .05 inches.

### Coverage

The coarseness of the sheeting may cause half-tones over 75 percent tint value to fill in. Half-tones under 5 percent tint value may not print at all. Most images are printed at 60-75 lpi, but some half-tones may have to be printed using 40-55 lpi for optimum coverage and printability. The designer may need to adjust the separation angles, the separation technique, and/or dot shape to optimize printing of the design. Thin lines less than 1/32 of an inch may break up or print unevenly.

### Colorants

The colorants used for digital license plate printing are resin ribbons manufactured to be UV fade-resistant. These ribbons produce colors that are transparent in order to meet reflectivity standards. The digital license plate printing process does not use the Pantone color match system. For optimum color matching, colors should be selected from the 3M Digital Graphic License Plate Colors book. Opaque, Metallic, and Fluorescent Pantone inks (numbers 801-877) are not available for plate printing.

## Design Parameters

Keep the following parameters in mind before starting any license plate design.

### Size

The finished plate size for digital license plates is 12 inches wide by 6 inches high. Designs must fit into an 11.4375-inch by 5.4375-inch rectangle with radius corners sized to match the debossing rim of the blanking press. The resulting ¼-inch margin is needed to ensure acceptable finished license plates, given the requirements of the sheeting and the production processes. Bolt holes are .3125 inches in diameter and each are spaced (to bolt hole center) +/- 5.3 inches horizontal and +/- 2.375 inches vertical from the center of the plate.

### Line Art

Avoid thin lines under 1/32 inch. Intricate solid shapes are acceptable, but a loss of detail may occur. Design elements (shapes) smaller than .008 x .008 inches and/or .008 inches in any dimension may fail to print.

*(Continued next page)*

## Color

Typical four-color designs should be designed and set up using the CMY colors only. The fourth color station, typically the black color, will usually be used for a separate spot color for printing the alphanumeric characters. While half-tones and graduated tones can be used, a shift in these tones may result due to the unique properties of the reflective materials, ribbons, and printing process.

Due to the excessive heat that could be generated by producing plate designs with large color fill areas, there should be a limited amount of color saturation. If designs with large color fill areas are used, there may be limits on the number of plates able to print at one time. For best results, the following guidelines are suggested:

- If the background graphic is to fill the entire 5½ inch by 11½ inch area, the tonal value for any one color covering the entire area should not exceed 25 percent.
- The total tonal value of all colors should not exceed 50 percent. This can be found through Adobe PhotoShop. After bringing the design into PhotoShop, select the bilinear image resample and then reduce the size of the image to one pixel. Use the magnify tool to enlarge the pixel. Make sure the image is in CMYK mode. Place the magic wand tool over the pixel and add the percentage values in the Info Box. Any total over 50 percent could be troublesome over extended runs.

The designer should seek to balance the use of color in the design across the license plate. Designs with color on one side of the plate but not on the other side, or uneven color distribution across the plate, could cause ribbon wrinkling during printing.

## Graphic Placement and Legibility

Avoid heavy coverage of colorant in the alphanumeric areas. **Heavy coverage in these areas reduces readability for law enforcement.** Design elements (text and logos) dark in color should be spaced at least ¼ inch away from the alphanumeric characters. (See the Overview on page 1 of this packet.)

## Trapping

Because of the transparent properties of the thermal transfer ribbons, trapping between colors and half-tones are not recommended.

## Software Compatibility

3M TCM uses Adobe Illustrator and Adobe PhotoShop on both Macintosh and PC computers and CorelDraw on PC computers.

### Compatibility

3M TCM accepts Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, CorelDraw, and Adobe Acrobat files. All placed or parsed bitmap files must be included separately. For Adobe Illustrator files, save in the Illustrator .ai format. For Adobe PhotoShop files, save in the .psd format. Save with elements on separate layers and do not flatten before saving. For CorelDraw files, save in the .cdr format. For Adobe Acrobat files, save in .pdf format. Include all placed or embedded bitmaps as separate files. All files, in any format, must have anti-aliasing and color profiles turned off.

If you believe there may be a compatibility issue between your system and 3M TCM's, also send black and white color separation printouts on paper or film, or composite prints, at 100 percent. 3M TCM will scan and recreate artwork to match the original design. Before making products, fill all half-tones 100 percent so that shapes can be clearly delineated. Include a composite print of the design at 100 percent. Specify all fonts used, color call outs, and half-tone tint values if half-tones are used. If photographs are incorporated into the design, please submit. 3M TCM will scan them for placement into the design.

Do not use compression software of any kind for vector files. 3M TCM does not use 3D or CAD software.

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## Electronic Design Guidelines

The following guidelines are for customers sending electronic files.

All license plate designs are completed in vector form (Adobe Illustrator or CorelDraw) with places for photographs (if any). 3M TCM prefers that customers send original photographs and/or traditional illustrations for scanning and converting to spot color. 3M TCM will accept Adobe PhotoShop files or tiff files of scanned or created material. However, the resolution cannot be increased. Acceptable disc formats are listed below.

### Vector Artwork

Fonts, logos, half-tones, gradient fill areas, and lines in general should be constructed in a vector drawing program such as Adobe Illustrator or CoralDraw. This makes file sizes small as well as making editing, trapping, and color separation easier.

Convert all fonts to vector form by using Create outlines or convert text to paths according to whatever vector program is being used; or, send the True Type Font used in the design on the disc with the design.

### Bitmapped Artwork

Bitmapped artwork is any image like a scanned photograph or traditional illustration that is in pixel form, commonly used or created in a paint program like Adobe PhotoShop or Corel Paint. Bitmapped artwork can be successfully incorporated into a license plate design in a variety of ways. Again, 3M TCM prefers that the customer send continuous tone photographs and/or traditional illustrations for scanning, clipping path creation, spot color conversion, placing, and color separating. 3M TCM can accept scanned or created images from the customer with a resolution of 300 dpi at 100 percent size. Do not use any anti-aliasing in PhotoShop. This includes tools such as the magic wand, paint bucket, lasso, and marquee tools. Anti-aliasing will only result in a blurry image when printed.

3M TCM will scan and convert any line art on paper or film. 3M TCM will not scan half-tones for reuse.

Customers sending in pictures for scanning should keep in mind that photographs or illustrations from previously printed materials such as books, magazines, and brochures will not scan well due to half-tone dot patterns. Scanning such material may constitute a copyright violation for which the customer, not 3M TCM, will be held liable. Do not send website images or printouts. Website images are typically at the lowest possible image quality and so are not usable.

Since color photographs and illustrations will be converted to CMY and one spot color, this will limit the number of colors to four. The finished result is basically a compilation of monochromatic (single spot color) areas. Save bitmapped artwork in the tiff file format. 3M TCM does not recommend image compression. If image must be compressed, use only LZW compression. JPEG compression permanently degrades the image.

Include a hard copy or detailed layout for each design. This can be color, black and white laser prints, or drawn layouts. Include color call-outs, identify the fonts used, and specify half-tone values. This avoids any confusion concerning the design and its elements.

## Electronic Submission Formats

The electronic specialty license plate design may be submitted on one of the following:

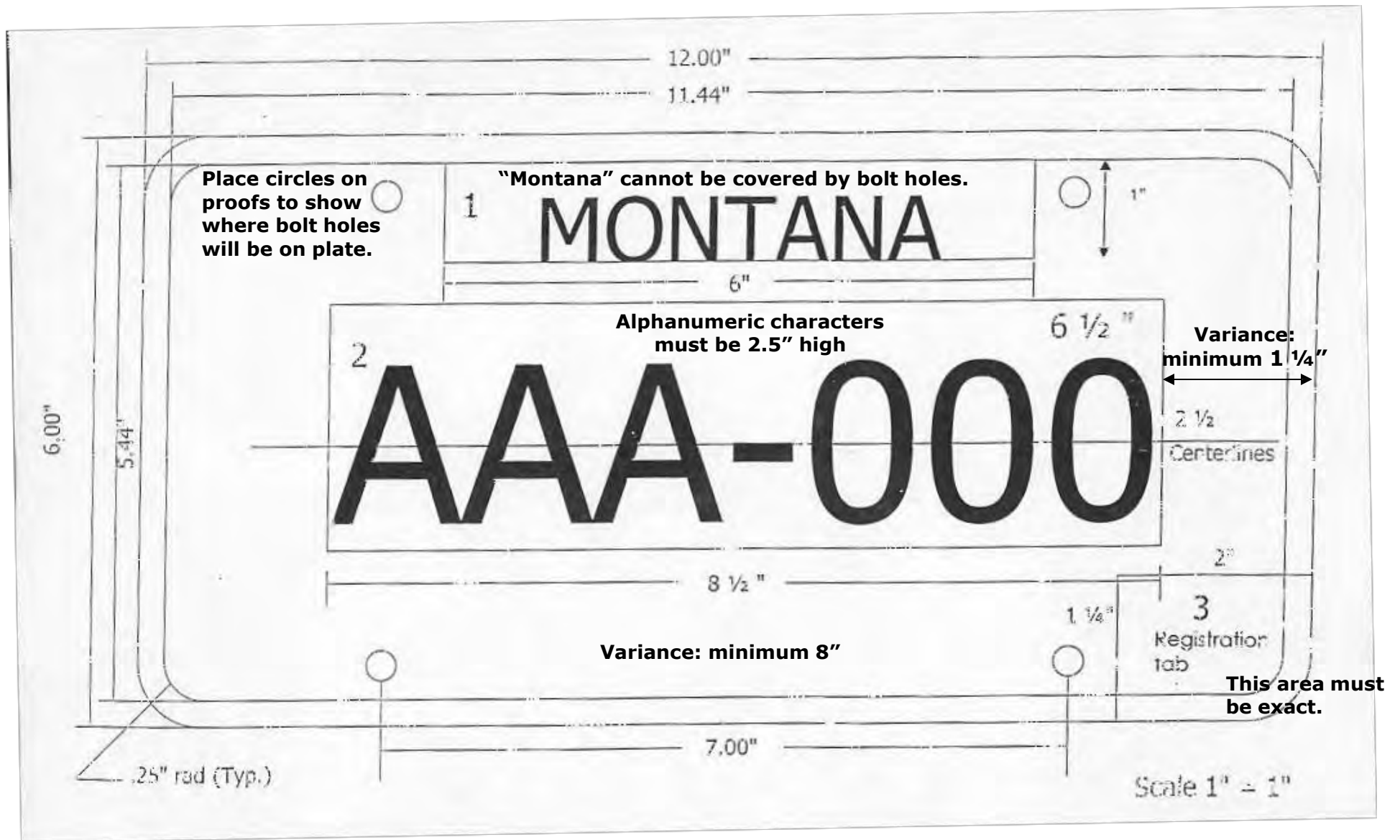
- Compact Disc (CD)
- Digital Versatile Disc (DVD)
- USB Flash Drive

## Diagram of Design Area

The following diagram outlines the designated design areas for specialty plates.

## Specialty License Plate Design Areas

These are the guidelines that must be followed when designing specialty plates and creating proofs of those plates.







# Organization Application to Sponsor a Specialty License Plate

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Fee: \$4,120 (fee includes 3% administration fee per MCA 61-3-111 make check payable to Montana Correctional Enterprises)

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Complete this application and submit it to the above address. **If you are a nonprofit organization**, complete sections A, C, D, and E. **If you are a governmental body or governmental sponsor**, complete sections B, C, D, and E.

## A. Nonprofit Organization (other than a governmental body) Applying for Sponsorship

Name of organization

Physical address (*required*)

City

State

Zip

Mailing address (*if different from above*)

City

State

Zip

Tax ID Number

Website address

Telephone Number

The **required donation** as determined by the sponsor is \$\_\_\_\_\_; **renewal** (if applicable) is \$\_\_\_\_\_. If charging a renewal fee, it must be the same fee as the required donation for programming ease. These fees may not be changed unless a new plate design is authorized in accordance with MCA 61-3-475.

The following proofs of qualification are attached (*all are required*):

\_\_\_\_ Copy of the determination letter from the IRS of the applying organization's 26 USC 501(c)(3) tax exempt status

\_\_\_\_ Copy of charter or bylaws (signed)

\_\_\_\_ Proof of good standing if organization is a corporation and is required to be registered with the office of the Montana Secretary of State

\_\_\_\_ Proof that the organization's headquarters or base of operations is in Montana

\_\_\_\_ Proof that organization is in good standing and has authorization in writing from the parent organization to use the name and graphic of the parent organization

\_\_\_\_ Proof that the organization has an active telephone number listed under its name in one published Montana directory

Name the specific directory \_\_\_\_\_ Name the specific city \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Completed W-9 form, which can be obtained at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

**-OR-**

\_\_\_\_ **In lieu of completing the proofs of qualifications, you may submit an opinion letter from an attorney licensed to practice in Montana that the applying organization meets all the requirements of MCA 61-3-473(3) and 61-3-475(1).**

## B. Governmental Body Applying for Sponsorship

Name of executive body of a tribal government, state agency, commission, or council of a local government or political subdivision, or name of school district

Physical address (*required*)

City

State

Zip

Mailing address (*if different from above*)

City

State

Zip

Tax ID

Website address

Telephone Number

Number

MV115 (5/18)

**If a state agency:**

- \_\_\_\_ Identify the statutory authority under which you seek sponsorship of these plates: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ Specify the account in which any plate donations will be placed: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_ Specify the amount of **donation required** for issuance \$\_\_\_\_\_ and **renewal** \$\_\_\_\_\_. If charging a renewal fee, it must be the same fee as the required donation fee for programming ease. The fees may not be changed unless a new plate design is authorized in accordance with MCA 61-3-477.

**If other governmental body:**

- \_\_\_\_ Specify the amount of **donation required** for issuance: \$\_\_\_\_\_ and **renewal** \$\_\_\_\_\_. If charging a renewal fee, it must be the same fee as the required donation fee for programming ease. The fees may not be changed unless a new plate design is authorized in accordance with MCA 61-3-477.

**C. Liaison Information**

____	____	____	____
Name of organization's specialty license plate liaison (please print)	Email address	Telephone number	
____			
____	____	____	____
Mailing address	City	State	Zip

**D. Purpose of Plate**

To help educate potential donors, provide a brief summary of how your organization will use the funds collected from your plate. **Limit your description to 50 words or less.** This information will be posted with your plate on the Motor Vehicle Division website.

*Example: This plate benefits organizations that create or support autism awareness programs. This plate generates funds for research, public awareness and education programs, scholarship programs, and to provide support for caregivers for individuals with autism.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**E. Authorized Signature**

- I understand and accept the sponsor plate requirements of MCA 61-3-472 through 61-3-481.
- Under penalty of law (MCA 45-7-203), I certify that the statements made and information contained on this form are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief; I am the person named on this form; and, if signing for a business entity or trust, I have full authority to do so.

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_

This is My Legal Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Department use only:**

☐ The application for sponsorship is approved.

MVD Liaison Signature/Date \_\_\_\_\_

☐ The application for sponsorship is rejected for the following reasons: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Update Information for Sponsor of a Specialty License Plate

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**On a yearly basis,** review all contact and plate information featured on the Motor Vehicle Division's website at <https://dojmt.gov/driving/plate-designs-and-fees/>.

**If updates are needed,** complete this form (sections A, B, D) and return it to the address above. **If all information is current,** complete sections A, C, and D and return the form to the address above.

## A. Name of Sponsoring Organization or Governmental Body (*cannot be changed from what was listed on the original application*):

## B. Fill out ONLY the information that needs to be updated:

Telephone number	Website	Tax ID number	
Mailing address	City	State	Zip
Physical address	City	State	Zip
Printed name of organization Liaison			
Liaison telephone number	Email address		
Liaison mailing address	City	State	Zip
Purpose of plate (limit description to 50 words or less):			

## C. All information is current:

☐ I have reviewed my organization's information as listed on the Motor Vehicle Division's website <https://dojmt.gov/driving/plate-designs-and-fees/> and no updates are needed at this time.

## D. Official authorized to sign for the organization:

This is my legal signature	Printed name	Date
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# Application to Change the Organization Name

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**Note:** To change only the organization's contact information or description of how plate funds are used, submit form MV115A Update Information for Sponsor of a Specialty License Plate. If you want to change your plate design, use form MV115 Organization Application to Sponsor a Specialty License Plate.

**To change the name of your organization,** complete this application and submit it to the above address. This form is for an organization name change only; it will not change your plate design.

Applications for an organization name change received before **September 1** will be implemented on January 31 of the following year. Applications received before **March 1** will be implemented by July 31 of the same year.

Following the implementation date, the new name of the organization will appear on:

1. The MVD [License Plates Designs and Fees](#) website
2. The banner displayed in County Treasurer offices showing the license plate design and sponsoring organization
3. Checks or EFT payments
4. The information printed on financial statements for donations
5. The specialty license plates donation report on [MVD by the Numbers](#)
6. The MVD's internal inventory and plate order information

Any printed data prior to the implementation date will not be changed.

## A. Nonprofit Organization Applying for Name Change

**OLD** name of organization

**NEW** name of organization

Physical address ( <i>required</i> )	City	State	Zip
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Mailing address ( <i>if different from above</i> )	City	State	Zip
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Tax ID Number	Website address	Telephone Number
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Attach the following proofs of qualification (*all are required*):

- \_\_\_\_ Copy of the determination letter from the IRS of the applying organization's 26 USC 501(c)(3) tax exempt status **in the organization's new name**
- \_\_\_\_ Proof of good standing if organization is a corporation and is required to be registered with the office of the Montana Secretary of State
- \_\_\_\_ Completed W-9 form **in the organization's new name**; it can be obtained at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

Optional:

- \_\_\_\_ If the organization uses or wants to use the electronic funds transfer (EFT) direct deposit option to receive payments, a request form **in the organization's new name** is required. You can request a form from the Specialty Plate Liaison at [mvdtitleinfo@mt.gov](mailto:mvdtitleinfo@mt.gov).

## B. Liaison Information – Update if Necessary

Name of organization's specialty license plate liaison (please print) \_\_\_\_\_ Email address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

## C. Purpose of Plate – Update if Necessary

To help educate potential donors, provide a brief summary of how your organization will use the funds collected from your plate. **Limit your description to 50 words or less.** This information will be posted with your plate on the Motor Vehicle Division website.

*Example:* This plate benefits organizations that create or support autism awareness programs. This plate generates funds for research, public awareness and education programs, scholarship programs, and to provide support for caregivers for individuals with autism.

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## D. Authorized Signature

Under penalty of law (MCA 45-7-203), I certify that the statements made and information contained on this form are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief; I am the person named on this form; and, if signing for a business entity or trust, I have full authority to do so.

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_

This is My Legal Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Department use only:

☐ The application for name change is approved.

MVD Liaison Signature/Date \_\_\_\_\_

☐ The application for name change is rejected for the following reasons: \_\_\_\_\_

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