

Holiday Greetings



The holidays are once again upon us and it is time to look back on the past year. As it always seems to go so very fast it is important to reflect on our accomplishments as we begin to look forward to the New Year.

One of our biggest initiatives in the Bureau of Vital Statistics is the implementation of our electronic birth registration (EBR) system throughout the state. With EBR, we are streamlining the birth registration process, utilizing a more efficient way of filing birth records, receiving more quality data, and continuing to provide the best possible customer service. Hospitals anxiously await their chance to “come onboard”. This past year 19 additional hospitals were brought online, bringing the total number of hospitals utilizing the system to 35. The coming year will bring even more births online allowing us to meet our goal of having over 50 percent of all Florida births registered electronically by this time next year.

Of course our other strategic re-engineering project is the design and implementation of the Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS). Planning continues on EDRS. Implementation did not proceed as quickly as we would like in 2008 due to budgetary constraints, but we have been able to take that challenge and make it work for us. There is much

interest by all of our partners around the state and around the nation.. In September, the Florida Bureau of Vital Statistics was one of only four states to receive a PanFlu grant from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to assist in the deployment of the new electronic death registration process. The award of \$562,828 provides needed support as we begin to pilot and deploy the EDRS in 2009

Together we have accomplished much and together there is much more that we will accomplish in the coming year. I want to share my appreciation for a job more than well done. It takes many people working together to have a successful vital records system; county offices, state offices, clerks of court, as well as hospital staff, midwives, funeral home and medical examiner staff, physicians and staff — all of us moving forward with the goal of achieving our mission to serve the citizens of Florida. Dedication, hard work, fortitude, compassion, willingness to take that extra step — demonstrated qualities that make Florida’s vital records system one of the best in the country.

My best wishes I extend to you all; may this season bring you joy, peace, and the satisfaction of knowing that you have made a difference.

C. Meade Grigg, State Registrar



In This Issue

- Holiday Greetings
- Meet ‘N Greet
- Surrendered/Abandoned Baby Law, s. 383.50, F.S.
- Disappearing Ink
- Home Deaths
- Florida SSA Online Verification One of Best % in US
- Welcome Aboard
- In Memoriam
- No Automatic “Free” BC to New Parents
- CDRAC Update
- Bits ‘N Pieces



Front: India McHellen, Miracle English, Justa Taylor, Pollie Ocbina
Middle: Ana Goold, Louise Ramsey, Regina Mendoza, Eida DesArden, Chris George
Back: Carol Kwaak, Delcina Sanders, Guanita Hester, Linda Floyd, Pat McCormick

and Ana Goold, Records Center Manager. Paternity records specialists include Delcina Sanders, Guanita Hester, Linda Floyd, and Louise Ramsey. CSE records specialists include Chris George and Eida DesArden. Our fiscal support team of Carol Kwaak and India McHellen accept the fees and place the requests into our tracking system. We couldn’t function without our support staff, Pat McCormick, Justa Taylor, Keisha Fluker, Miracle English, Pollie Ocbina, and Regina Mendoza. Each of these team members have a vital role in the process.

The Paternity/CSE unit consistently achieves and surpasses productivity goals, while continuing to provide quality customer service to our clients.

MEET ‘N GREET

The **Paternity/Child Support Enforcement (CSE) Unit’s** objective is to amend records by adding, removing or changing a father’s name on a child’s birth record by reviewing acknowledgments of paternity affidavits, court orders and other supporting documentation. We also work closely with child support offices statewide and provide services to out of state enforcement offices. We interact with the public daily through phone calls, written correspondence and in person consultations.

Paternity/CSE staff are led by Betty Shannon, Program Administrator; Gwen McNeil, Health Services Manager;

Surrendered/Abandoned Baby Law, S. 383.50, F.S.

The legislature recently updated the Safe Haven law which relates to surrendered or abandoned babies. The term “surrendered” is now preferred over “abandoned”, and the baby can be up to seven days old, as opposed to the earlier three days old. It is important to note that this law guarantees the mother’s anonymity will be protected, thus she need not fear legal repercussions when surrendering her baby to a fire station or hospital. Since 2000, 119 babies have been saved through this program.

Hospital procedures in completing birth records for these babies have also changed. The Vital Records Registration Handbook has been updated to reflect these changes:

- Mother’s Maiden Name must indicate Unknown in the name field;
- All other parent information must show Unknown;
- Signature of Parent should indicate Unavailable;
- All of the baby’s information, as known, should be completed;
- Birth registrar should notate name of hospital completing the record and “Safe Haven baby” on the back of the record in the upper right margin

Questions on how to handle this situation or any birth registration questions should be directed to Paula Mundy, Birth Registration Manager, 904-359-6900 ext. 1005; or to the quality assurance unit.

Disappearing Ink

It has come to the attention of the state office that there is a certain brand of pen on the market that when it reaches a certain temperature, the ink disappears. The manufacturer is Pilot and the name is FriXion Ball. This is a thermo-sensitive gel ink pen intended to be erasable. Obviously, an erasable pen should *never* be used on a legal document.

Please, if such a pen is in your possession, do not use on birth or death certificates.

HOME DEATHS

Florida Statutes do not address home deaths and whether or not they should be considered a medical examiner’s (ME) case. What falls under the jurisdiction of the ME is outlined in s. 406.11, 12, F.S. Whether a case meets the necessary criteria is determined by the ME’s office and the investigation that ensues when someone dies at home.

There are some physicians who are reluctant to certify death in the instance of the home death. These physicians should be reassured that if the ME has done their investigation as the legal authority in the district, and determined there is nothing that leads them to believe it comes under their jurisdiction, then the death is from natural causes and the attending physician can certify to the best of their knowledge or belief as to the cause of death. Should additional information come to light at a later date, the record can always be amended.

Florida SSA Online Verification One Of Best % In US

In January 2008, the state office implemented an online verification process with the Social Security Administration whereby the decedent’s social security number is verified in real time as the death record is keyed. This verification process goes through a match protocol to ensure it has been matched to the correct person. In doing this, SSA gets notification of the decedent’s death in a much timelier fashion than the old process of waiting for the monthly file. This equates to considerable savings to SSA and ultimately the taxpayer. Florida is proud to say our initial match rate is 91%, with an overall successful match rate at almost 97%.

Once EDRS is implemented, the verification process will take place at the time the funeral director enters the information. The same match process will occur, but the data will be available that much sooner, within days of the date of death.

We’re excited about this opportunity to work with our federal partners for such a successful outcome.

Welcome Aboard



The following appointments have been made to the position of registrar in the county health department:

Local Registrar:

- Marlon Hunter Gadsden
- Jody Smith Wakulla
- Gail Allen Walton
- Rick Davis Washington

Chief Deputy Registrar

- Judy Mishoe Lake
- Gloria Norfleet-Robinson.....Osceola

The Vital Records Registration Handbook 2007 Revision & the Birth & Death editions of the handbook can be downloaded from the web-site at:

http://www.doh.state.fl.us/planning_eval/vital_statistics/index.html

In Memoriam

The Osceola County Health Department and the Bureau of Vital Statistics has lost a valuable team member and friend in Victoria Brack, Chief Deputy Registrar, who died on Saturday, September 20, 2008. Victoria worked for vital statistics for over 13 years and for the department 15 years.

In addition to her years of state service, Victoria was also an active member of the Chief Deputy Registrar Advisory Committee. Victoria's dedication to her job and her customers, her attention to detail, and her charming personality will be missed by all of us. Our thoughts go out to her family and co-workers.

Chief Deputy Registrar Advisory Committee (Cdrac) Update

The Chief Deputy Registrar Advisory Committee has added two new members. Alexa Doepel, CDR, Brevard County, replaces Darlene Ginrich, CDR, Lake County, who has moved into another position within the department. This seat represents District 2, or the central Florida area. Eva Williams CDR Broward County has taken the seat vacated by the recent death of Victoria Brack, CDR, Osceola County. This seat represents District 4, or southeastern Florida. We look forward to hearing from the two new members and appreciate their willingness to serve.

CDRAC has recently reviewed the CDR Operations Manual (COM) and the Vital Records Registration Handbook to be sure we have included all necessary information and that the information is clear and concise for the user.

The County Health Department phone list (with fees) is posted to the Internet at:

http://www.doh.state.fl.us/planning_eval/vital_statistics/index.htm. The list is updated quarterly & can be downloaded at any time. Be sure to verify with the county if there are additional fees.

A bit of birth registration humor:

The other day my neighbor came running up to me in the driveway, jumping for joy! I didn't know why she was so excited, but I thought, "what the heck", and I starting jumping up and down along with her. She said she had some really great news! She stopped jumping and told me that she was pregnant! I knew she'd been trying for awhile so I told her, that I couldn't be happier for her. Then she said, "There's more, we're not having just one baby, we're going to have TWINS!" Amazed at how she could know so soon after getting pregnant, I asked her how she knew. She told me, "That was the easy part. I went to Sam's Club and they actually had a home pregnancy kit in a TWIN-pack — both tests came out positive!"

No Automatic "Free" Bc To New Parents

There seems to be something of an "urban legend" roaming around in Florida hospitals. The state office receives daily inquiries from parents wanting to know where their "free" birth certificate is for their baby. They are convinced they were told they would get a free copy and "remember" getting one with their last child.

There is no automatic free copy of a birth certification. Most facilities provide a packet of information upon the mother and child's release, which may include information on how to obtain a certification from either the county or state office, but there is a fee associated with this service.

The birth registrar works with the mother in completing a birth worksheet from which the actual birth certificate is constructed, so it may be that the parents misunderstand this process and conclude that they will get a free certification. Perhaps they question if there is a fee for completing and filing the birth certificate and when told that there is no fee involved, it is misinterpreted. It's really hard to say how the misunderstanding actually originates, but we don't want parents failing to order a birth certification under the misconception they will automatically get one in the mail, free of charge.

We ask hospital birth registrars to work with the parents and explain they may obtain a certification of their child's birth certificate from any county health department or from the state office. Information on obtaining the certification from the state office can be found on our website at: http://www.doh.state.fl.us/planning_eval/vital_statistics/index.html.

Bits 'N Pieces



Preparers and reviewers of vital records: be mindful of the **date change**, come January 1—it will be 2009. We want to be sure all records reflect the correct date so that families are not inconvenienced with unnecessary delays while records are amended.

Past issues of the Vital News can be found on the department's website at the following address:

http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Planning_eval/Vital_Statistics/VitalNews/vn-index.htm

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