

## Season's Greetings From The State Registrar



We close out 2012 with the satisfaction of knowing that the launching of the Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) in October 2011 was not only successful, but it was finished in less than one year! Any accolades received must be shared by the many who helped make the rollout successful. Our partners in the field: funeral directors, medical examiners, physicians, hospitals, and their staff were integral components of EDRS implementation. County staff, Tallahassee staff, and state office staff, pulled together to reach our goal.

As busy as EDRS has kept us and continues to keep us, in conjunction with the National Association of Public Health Statistics and Information Systems (NAPHSIS), we managed to implement the Electronic Verification of Vital Events (EVVE). EVVE is used to allow authorized agencies, such as SSA and Passport Services, to electronically verify that certifications are authenticated with the state of birth, via real-time applications. Another technological advancement that increases our efficiency!

2013 will see us looking to the Clerks of Court Association, and together we will continue the automation process whereby divorce records are transmitted electronically, eliminating the need for paper filing; and we will further pursue the various approaches for electronically filing marriage records.

As Florida's State Registrar, I look upon these achievements with awe and respect. Whenever I represent our state at a national function I take great pride in being able to speak on our many accomplishments. I know we have one of the best teams, who are committed to meeting the needs of Florida's citizens in the most efficient and cost effective manner. The coming year will present its own challenges and opportunities, and together, we will be ready for them. From all of us at the Bureau of Vital Statistics, we wish you the very best of holiday seasons and look forward to a healthy and prosperous New Year.



## Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS), It's a Wrap!

Implementation of the Electronic Death Registration System was launched on October 31, 2011, a fitting date for the death system. It's exciting to note that statewide implementation *concluded* with Miami-Dade County going live September 24, 2012. It's safe to say that the current system has many differences than the system launched last year. We worked with our users, funeral directors, medical examiners, physicians, and county staff as we rolled out the system, making changes, tweaking processes, adding reports, building a strong helpdesk, etc., ultimately making it an even better system.

At press time, 97% of Florida's approximately 175,000 death records are being filed electronically. Online users are at 18-20%, with the balance filing via the electronic Fax Attestation process. EDRS Round 2 has begun and the remaining funeral establishments not online have been contacted by letter and by phone, encouraging them to join the "progressive side". EDRS Round 3, beginning in the New Year, will be approaching the approximately 250 physicians who sign the bulk of the death records and bringing them online, which would bring our online users up to better than 48%.

Any funeral director or physician who is not an EDRS user and would like to be should contact the state office, 904-359-6900 ext. 9020 or call the Helpdesk, 1-866-295-5902. We can get you there in no time!

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## *National Association for Public Health Statistics & Information System (NAPHSIS) Southern Regional Meeting - Greenville, SC November 1-2, 2012*

Visiting vital statistics staff could not have asked for a finer spot for this year's Southern Regional Meeting, held in downtown Greenville, South Carolina. Meade Grigg, Betty Shannon, Ana Goold, Yasmin Serrano, and Kenny Higginbotham represented Florida. Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi also sent representatives. Those unable to attend not only missed the beautiful weather and fall color, but they missed an interesting meeting with a jam-packed agenda.

NAPHSIS Executive Director, Trish Potrzebowski updated the group on what was new with NAPHSIS headquarters and what other jurisdictions were doing as it related to the agenda items. As we moved into the meeting, some topics discussed were:

- Approval of the Comprehensive Vital Statistics Standards. The national survey on vital statistics data use and best practices has been completed and the preliminary results will be announced in December.
- The Security committee has finalized a draft of the Security Guidelines Manual with plans on enhancing the NAPHSIS security website.
- STEVE has been installed and the roster file must follow the proscribed file format. Those not on STEVE will have to comply by January 2014.
- The NAPHSIS cause of death training module has been created to help physicians complete the death certificate more accurately. Training was focused on ME/coroners. It is available for jurisdiction members to view as a model for establishing a state specific module for their jurisdiction.
- The review of the Model Vital Statistics Law has been completed.
- A 2 day symposium will be held in December at NAPHSIS headquarters to discuss improving data exchanges from vital statistics jurisdictions to NCHS.
- A proposal has been made by NAPHSIS to make an association name change to provide a better indication of who we are and the work we do. There was much discussion by the group on this topic.
- NAPHSIS is considering returning the National Death Index data project back to the states.

All of the states discussed how their electronic death registration systems were progressing. Most states had almost 50% compliance from the funeral homes and doctors with EDRS. Florida reported a 96% rate of death records being filed electronically; 18-20% of users are completely online, while the balance of users file using the Fax Attestation process. In hopes of improving EDRS participation, South Carolina passed new legislation in June 2012, making electronic filing mandatory by September 2012.

The Department of State representative, George Smarz, provided the meeting attendees samples of legitimate forms of identification from foreign countries and the latest ID guidebooks. Identity theft and proper documentation seems to be a universal issue.

Public relations coordinator, Karen Potter, moderated exercises that demonstrated the proper responses to a health crisis that involves the public. With flu season upon us, this was helpful information to have.

As always, neighboring states having this opportunity to come together is valuable. Sharing ideas, discussing commonality, helping us promote a healthy and cooperative partnership with the other states, maybe even solving the same problem that impacts bordering states – how can this not be beneficial to everyone participating?. At the end of the day, it is the citizen who benefits the most, whether from South Carolina, North Carolina, Texas, or whatever state it might be.

### **2013 Revised Fetal Death Certificate**

The Bureau of Vital Statistics has revised the Florida Certificate of Fetal Death, DH 428, to bring the form and data collected in alignment with the National Standard form as prescribed by the National Center for Health Statistics. Implementation is schedule for January 1, 2013. Most of the changes on the revised form are to the field labels. Some labels have been renumbered, and some labels were re-vamped with additional verbiage to provide a clearer definition of what data is to be gathered.

The state office will provide revised, pre-printed paper forms to the county health departments for distribution to their local funeral homes, hospitals and medical examiners offices. The forms will be sent in late December. Upon request, the state office will also provide an enterable PDF version of the fetal death certificate.

With the successful completion of the Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) implementation, the Bureau of Vital Statistics is working on developing an online module for Electronic Fetal Death Registration. Our goal is to have a working pilot in 2014, so stay tuned and watch for emails with more details.



## Spotlight on... Taylor County

Taylor County was created in 1856 and named for Zachary Taylor, twelfth President of the United States of America, who served from 1849 to 1850.

Since 2005, the Taylor County Health Department has served a population over 19,000 and a total area of 1,232 square miles.

With over 27 years of experience, the vital statistics team includes deputy registrars Sonja Burford, Audra Gorby and Chief Deputy Registrar, June Dice. Last year, the crew issued over 1100 birth certifications and more than 700 death certificates, serving four funeral homes; that's a lot for a small county!. Business Manager, Dawn Gunter comments on the recent electronic death registration system (EDRS), "EDRS has been very beneficial for Taylor County Health Department. Being in a rural community, having access to the records is essential. EDRS allows our clients and those grieving and assisted by the funeral homes to come locally to receive the certificates rather than having to travel sometimes over an hour to receive them. It has been a great help to not only the county, but the funeral homes and residents of our county." Keep up the great customer service, Taylor County Vitals!



(Pictured from L to R) Deputy registrars, Sonja Burford, Audra Gorby and Chief Deputy Registrar June Dice

### Funeral Director's Corner

- **Disposition approval for Removal from State.** If other than burial when the remains reach their destination, the ME has to approve, and it is the responsibility of the funeral director to contact the ME and get approval. Some funeral homes print out the Death Medical Review Sheet and send it to the ME for his review and approval. Contact your local ME's office for the correct procedure in your district.
- With EDRS, **no burial transit permit is filed with the county;** the system issues the permit to the funeral director and it goes with the body; the system provides the other statutorily required information.
- **How can the funeral director help speed up the filing process?** - when there is a physician who has not yet used the new process, the funeral director should be sure to *call them first* and let them know a fax is coming. Once sent, call them back in a few minutes to be sure they received the fax. Follow-up after 24 hours, checking on the status, that's all. Remember, the physician has up to 72 hours to complete. If you get them to do it faster, that is great.
- **Do not use punctuation in any of the Name fields,** other than an apostrophe or hyphen; it could keep the record from moving forward until corrected.

### We Hear You!

When we launched the Electronic Death Registration implementation project in fall of 2011, we told you that we wanted your feedback, your input, your compliments and complaints.

We heard you and we listened. In January of 2013, just days away, the newest release of EDRS will go online and we are confident that you will find the changes very much to your liking.

Many of the changes are from direct feedback from you, the funeral director. Changes such as a "timer" for the 72 hours provided to the certifying physician. You can see this on the FAX tab of each record. When the 72 hours has passed, you will receive a pop up notice when opening the record, stating that the allotted time has passed and you should contact the doctor and offer assistance if needed.

Perhaps the biggest change that you requested is the new REPORTS tab on each record. This tab is a compilation of the monthly reports required by the Board of Funeral, Cemetery, and Consumer Services. Each death record has "copy boxes" for refrigeration, cremation, embalming, removal service and direct disposer. Placing a check in any of these boxes will automatically copy your facility and license information into the report fields. We have reduced your data entry by at least 50%. These reports will print in the format that you have seen for years. Working in conjunction with the funeral board, a rule change is in the works which would allow Vital Statistics to archive this data and therefore would no longer require that you send those reports to Tallahassee each month. Records and reports can be retrieved at any time. This makes the reports a "paperless" process and as such, a savings to you and the citizens of Florida.

There are many more wonderful enhancements in the new release, but we don't want to spoil all of the surprises just yet so stay tuned, there's more to come!

### Welcome Aboard

**The following appointments have been mad in the county health department:**

**Local Registrars**  
 Paul Myers .....Alachua County      Winston Charles..... Duval County  
 James Griffin .....Hardee County      Rachel Manspeaker.... Calhoun County

**Chief Deputy Registrar**  
 Jennifer West.....Polk County

