

## VITAL NEWS IN THE SUNSHINE STATE

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### DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN PUBLIC HEALTH

## Partnering to Improve Health Care Quality for Mothers and Babies

The Bureau of Vital Statistics (BVS) and the Florida Perinatal Quality Collaborative (FPQC) have partnered to create a Birth Certificate Initiative workgroup, consisting of birthing hospital staff to help improve the reporting accuracy of key birth certificate variables. The FPQC is directed by Dr. William Sappenfield, a pediatrician, epidemiologist and professor at the University of South Florida College of Public Health and works closely with the Department of Health, health professionals, advocates, policy makers and hospitals to improve Florida's maternal and infant health outcomes.

Phase 1 of the initiative gathered a workgroup that involved nine Florida hospitals, FPQC, BVS and various perinatal healthcare professionals volunteering to help gather information on birth certificates. Monthly webinars were conducted from March 2017 through December 2017 to discuss the importance of the key variables, best sources for the information and tools on how to gather the most accurate data. BVS provided the hospitals a list of randomly selected birth records filed at their facility for comparison with medical records to determine the accuracy of the data recorded on the birth certificate.

Phase 2 of the initiative began in July 2018 and concludes in June 2019 with the number of volunteer hospitals increasing to 17. Monthly training webinars provided a forum for the participating hospitals to share and discuss their results, learn about challenges of collecting data accurately, learn about quality tools to assist collection and make recommendations for improvement. Lessons learned from the initiative will enable the FPQC to develop online tools to help hospitals improve the accuracy of birth certificate reporting for public health purposes and to improve health care quality.

Additional online birth registration tools are available for facilities that are not participating in the workgroup. A birth registration manual is available from the BVS and an e-learning tool titled "Applying Best Practices for Reporting Medical and Health Information on Birth Certificates" is available through the National Center for Health Statistics web-link: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/training/BirthCertificateElearning/>. This e-learning tool offers continuing educational credits and also emphasizes the importance of quality data reporting.

## How to Meet Statutory Filing Requirements for Death Certificates

Section 382.006, Florida Statutes, states “The funeral director who first assumes custody of a dead body or fetus must obtain a burial-transit permit before final disposition and within 5 days after date of death.” Section 382.008, Florida Statutes, states “A certificate for each death and fetal death which occurs in this state shall be filed electronically on the department electronic death registration system or on a form prescribed by the department with the department or local registrar of the district in which the death occurred within 5 days after such death and prior to final disposition, and shall be registered by the department if it has been completed and filed in accordance with this chapter or adopted rules.” However, the Bureau of Vital Statistics (BVS) Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) automatically allows an extension on the filing of the death record for another five business days.

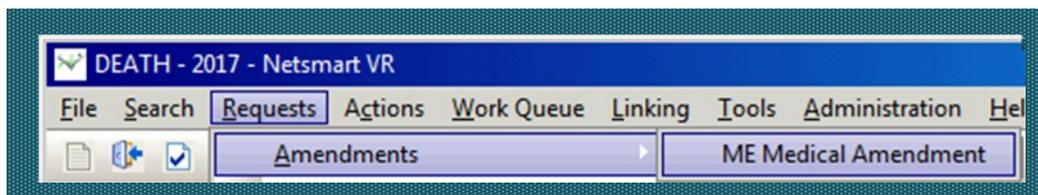
BVS developed the following tools to assist EDRS users in monitoring the progression of the death record and shorten filing times to stay in compliance with Florida Statutes:

- The “Work Queue” is a list of all death records still in pending status for a facility.
- Email reminders are sent by the system to funeral directors starting on the 8<sup>th</sup> day after the date of death, if the record has not been completed. Reminders continue until the record is completed.
- “Late Death Records” and “EDRS Compliance” reports are available through the “Batch” menu in EDRS and may be printed at any time.

If funeral directors need assistance in filing a death record on time they should contact the Chief Deputy Registrar of the county where the death occurred.

## Streamlining the Amendment Process for Medical Examiners

The Bureau of Vital Statistics (BVS) created a new pathway for Medical Examiners (MEs) within the Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) that allows for online amendments to their death records. This is NOT the same pathway used by the ME when taking over jurisdiction of a death record that was completed by another certifying physician. The ME amendment pathway will allow corrections to medical items such as the date of death, place of death, certifier information and ME case number, as well as autopsy, tobacco and cause of death information. The amendment pathway can be accessed through the Requests menu, as depicted below.



The online amendment pathway is only available to the MEs. All other certifying physicians, regardless of whether they complete death certificates electronically or manually, will need to complete a medical amendment affidavit (DH Form 434A), signing it in the presence of a notary and then mailing to the BVS to amend the death record. There is no fee required for a medical amendment and the DH Form 434A can be found on the department’s website:

<http://www.floridahealth.gov/certificates/certificates/publications-page.html>.

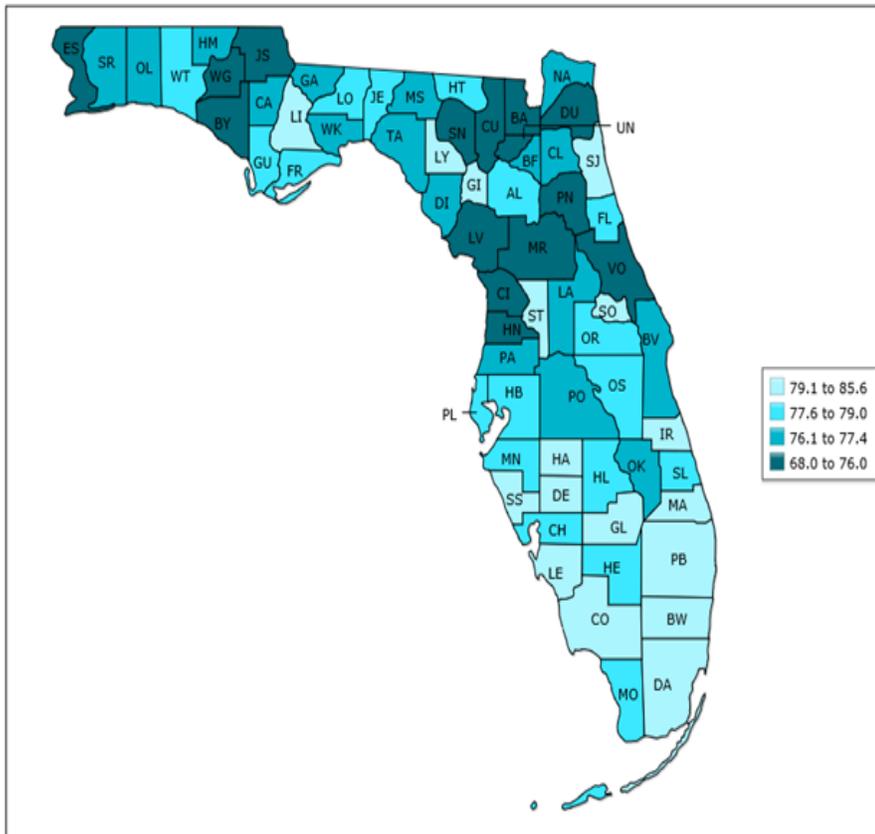
# Trending Now on FLHealthCHARTS

## Life Expectancy

Life expectancy is the number of years individuals are expected to live considering the age distribution and mortality by age of the population. Calculation of life expectancy assumes no one is moving into or out of the population. The only influences considered are deaths and population by age.

Floridians born in 2017 are expected to live 79.6 years. White females are expected to live 82.7 years, and black females are expected to live 80.9 years. White males are expected to live 77.1 years, and black males are expected to live 74.6 years.

3-Year Life Expectancy (in years) by County in Florida 2015-2017



Source: Florida Bureau of Vital Statistics and Florida Legislature, Office of Economic and Demographic Research

Life expectancy varies by county as shown in the map. Interpretation of these estimates must be made in the context of why people of certain ages live in a particular county. Do they live in the county because of employment, school, imprisonment or retirement? For example, older people may be attracted to one county for retirement, while younger people might be attracted to another county for college education.

Because most counties include numerous cities and communities, public health statistics are increasingly calculated at the census-tract level—a sub-county unit of measurement. Two national projects are calculating sub-county life expectancy for census-tracts—the U.S. Small-Area Life Expectancy Estimates Project (USALEEP) and the Sub-County Assessment of Life Expectancy (SCALE) Project. However, results from these projects should include complete statistical information and be used with additional information about the population to prevent simplistic interpretations such as concluding that problems exist in areas where life expectancy is the shortest.

Because census-tract estimates are based on smaller populations, life expectancy estimates by census tract will vary more than at the county level, with differences due to random variation rather than an actual difference in life span. Thus, when using census-tract data, differences between census tracts will need to be greater than the same differences between counties to be meaningful and not random. Confidence intervals around the differences should be examined to assess whether differences are significant or due to chance. In addition, data and information, such as the population's age distribution, should be considered to accurately interpret life expectancy.

[FLHealthCHARTS.com](http://FLHealthCHARTS.com) provides life expectancy by county in the [Population Atlas](#) and the [Health Equity Profile](#).

### Did You Know?

The first half of 2018 shows more deaths recorded than Live Births in the state of Florida? Deaths totaled at **107,569**, and Live Births were **106,645** for January through June 2018.

Provisional data supplied by FLHealthCHARTS dated 10/05/2018.

## Electronically Transmitting Marriage Records

Florida Statutes mandates all vital records to be filed with the Bureau of Vital Statistics (BVS) within specified timeframes. To assist vital record providers in meeting these dates, BVS has developed programs to facilitate electronic registration in the last several years. Due to the successful cooperation of all stakeholders, BVS electronically receives:

- Over 99% of all birth records from birthing hospitals and midwives;
- Over 99% of all death records from funeral directors and the Medical Examiners;
- 100% of all dissolution of marriage records from the Clerk of Courts;
- 65% of all marriage records from the Clerk of Courts.

There are 47 Clerk of Courts transmitting marriage records and BVS is working with the remaining clerks to reach 100% electronic by the end of 2019. Electronic transmission can save time and money for the clerks because paper records do not need to be copied, batched and mailed to the state office. Records sent electronically are received directly by BVS in a secure platform, while paper records may be lost or misdirected in shipping. The risk of paper packages being lost in the mail is eliminated and certifications are ready for issuance to clients immediately after electronic receipt by the bureau.

Clerk of Courts can learn more by contacting the Bureau of Vital Statistics Quality Assurance unit at (904) 359-6900 ext. 9020. The Quality Assurance unit can work with Clerk of Court's IT department to assist in setting up the electronic transmission process and provide technical guidance, if needed.

## Everbridge Emergency Notification System

The Bureau of Vital Statistics is working to expand its Everbridge distribution list to all partners to improve communication during emergency events.

Everbridge is used to determine the status of the county vital statistics office and if assistance is needed. Sharing the status of the county has proven helpful for all department partners.

The Bureau of Vital Statistics also utilizes the statewide Everbridge notification system to stay in contact with all 67 county health departments. It's very important that the county staff keep their contact information current. Department of Health personnel can access their Everbridge SERVFL account by accessing the following link:

<https://member.everbridge.netmanage/453003085611185/5743857366101811#/home>.

A helpful hint for Everbridge users is to store both 866-804-9169 and 850-245-4710 telephone numbers in your phone as the DOH Everbridge SERVFL Alert. This will serve as the caller ID when receiving an alert from Everbridge SERVFL.

## How to Request a Florida Birth Certificate

To order by mail, visit the Bureau of Vital Statistics (BVS) website at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/certificates> and download an application for a Florida birth record.

To find a local vital statistics office in Florida, visit <http://www.floridahealth.gov/certificates/certificates/publications-page.html>.

For more information, call the Bureau of Vital Statistics at (904) 359-6900 ext. 9000.

To order by phone or online through VitalChek, **the BVS only approved vendor**, call 1-877-550-7330 or visit [www.vitalchek.com](http://www.vitalchek.com). **VitalChek charges additional processing fees and offers an expedited shipping option.**

If the birth did not occur in the state of Florida, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w/index.htm> for additional information on other states.

## A Word About Ordering Records through Online Vendors

If you hear about customers, family or friends wishing to order a vital record online, please help them save money and share this important information. The Department's ONLY contracted vendor is VitalChek Network. VitalChek verifies the applicant's identity, obtains ordering information and downloads requests directly to the Bureau of Vital Statistics multiple times per day, which may expedite typical processing time. Many online companies not affiliated with the Florida Department of Health offer services to complete an application to obtain a birth, death, marriage or divorce certificate on behalf of the consumer on the pretense that the application process is confusing and time-consuming. However, these companies cannot obtain the certificate quicker than the consumer. In Florida, certificates are issued by the Department of Health's Vital Statistics offices by submitting an application, required fees and proper identification. Certificate requests are normally processed by the Florida Department of Health's Vital Statistics and mailed within 3–5 business days. Consumers can also receive birth and death certificates the same day if they visit a local county vital statistics office and/or the state office.

If customers feel they were party to an unfair business practice, they may file a consumer complaint with a consumer protection agency such as the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Office of the Attorney General or the Better Business Bureau. For more information call the Bureau of Vital Statistics at: (904) 359-6900 ext. 9000.



**TO ADD YOUR NAME TO THE BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS  
MAILING LIST, PLEASE CLICK [HERE](#).**

**QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?**

**E-MAIL [LORRAINE.KRATZ@FLHEALTH.GOV](mailto:LORRAINE.KRATZ@FLHEALTH.GOV)**