



VITAL NEWS IN THE SUNSHINE STATE

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DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Positive Partnerships

Working Together to Support Florida's Residents

In 2012, the Florida Bureau of Vital Statistics created a partnership with the Florida Tax Collectors and County Health Departments to issue Florida birth certificates within the Tax Collector offices. It was a partnership that enhanced the relationship between community agencies. As of July 2019, 39 counties with 125 Tax Collector offices have issued over 188,000 birth certificates. The need for birth certificates by families to enroll children in school, obtain identification, employment, benefits, etc. makes this program convenient and provides better service to Floridians.

Safeguarding the confidential information is a priority for all those involved. The local county vital statistics office staff provides training, assistance and monitoring of the Tax Collector office issuance to ensure accountability and adherence to standard protocols. Eligibility requirements are specified in statute and strict guidelines are enforced to prevent fraud and misuse.

To enhance service to Floridians, a new law enacted July 1, 2019, authorizes Tax Collector offices to access the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) database which contains death files from the Department of Health's Bureau of Vital Statistics. Tax Collector offices will be able to verify necessary information from the DHSMV death data, thus eliminating the need for families to present a certified death certificate when they are in need of transferring titles and registration certificates from the decedent to a surviving spouse.

Top 10 Eligibility Questions from County Health Departments

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| 1 | <p>How long is a Power of Attorney (POA) valid?</p> <p>Unless so stated, a POA has no expiration date as long as the grantor is still alive; POA ceases upon the death of the person/grantor initiating the document.</p> |
| 2 | <p>What is the difference between a court ordered Temporary Guardianship and a handwritten or typed Temporary Guardianship created by the parent?</p> <p>A temporary guardianship signed by a judge is a court order or command given by the court. Unless stated, there is no expiration date. If there is mention of a subsequent court date, the most recent court order should be requested. Temporary guardianship or general permission paperwork may be handwritten or typed but must be notarized and accompanied by the grantor's valid photo identification. If no expiration date is stated, the temporary guardianship or general permission paperwork expires 90 days from date signed.</p> |
| 3 | <p>Can a birth record be issued when it contains only the child's last name?</p> <p>Yes, the applicant's identification may be used to confirm his or her identity and eligibility and he or she must provide all the other information requested on the application</p> |
| 4 | <p>If the applicant/guardian is receiving benefits on behalf of the registrant, are they entitled to the birth record?</p> <p>Yes, a statement or letter from Department of Children and Families or Social Security Administration stating the person acting as guardian is receiving benefits in the child's name will entitle them to the birth certificate (also includes food stamp benefits and Medicaid).</p> |
| 5 | <p>Is an attorney required to provide documentation showing they represent an eligible party?</p> <p>No, however, they must represent an authorized person, and must provide that person's name and relationship to the registrant on the application. The attorney may provide their bar or license number in lieu of identification. Please note: A court order appointing an attorney as the administrator of the decedent's estate is NOT entitled to the birth certificate.</p> |
| 6 | <p>Who is entitled to a birth record marked deceased?</p> <p>Registrant's spouse, child, grandchild, or sibling, if of legal age or the legal representative of any such person. The state office must mark the birth record deceased prior to issuance.</p> |
| 7 | <p>Is a grandparent entitled to a death certificate with the cause of death?</p> <p>No, however, a grandchild is entitled to their grandparents' death certificate with cause of death.</p> |
| 8 | <p>Why are the first 5 digits of the decedent's Social Security number redacted on death certificates without cause of death?</p> <p>A death certificate without cause of death is issued as a public record, therefore, the first 5 digits are redacted to comply with s.119.071(5), Florida Statutes. Agencies may use the last 4 digits of the SSN in conjunction with the name and date of birth to verify the identity of the decedent.</p> |
| 9 | <p>Is the funeral home entitled to cause of death?</p> <p>The funeral home must be listed as the funeral home of record AND must represent an eligible party to receive cause of death. If the eligible party is not an immediate family member, the funeral home must provide supporting documentation.</p> |
| 10 | <p>I have an applicant presenting a will that is 10 years old, should I require something more recent?</p> <p>No, there is no requirement to update a will.</p> |

NAPHSIS Annual Meeting

The National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems (NAPHSIS) held its annual meeting June 3-6, 2019 in Columbus, Ohio. NAPHSIS was formed in 1933, and brings together members of state Vital Records offices from all 50 states, five territories, New York City and the District of Columbia. The primary topics covered in this year's meeting included Vital Records Accreditation, Security in the Digital Age and Improving Data Quality and Statistics. Vital Records accreditation training was offered to the attendees by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) for the new accreditation standards for state Vital Records offices. Florida's Bureau of Vital Statistics, along with five other states, were integral in the development of the standards and measures PHAB will be using to accredit state Vital Records offices throughout the nation.

Funeral Director Strategies If Doctor Has Reservations Signing a Death Record

A representative from the Bureau of Vital Statistics (BVS) attended the 2019 Independent Funeral Directors of Florida (IFDF) Annual Conference in Clearwater. The IFDF conference allows for plenty of opportunities for open discussions on the latest topics within the funeral industry. A popular topic of discussion are best strategies when working with a certifying physician that may be unfamiliar with death registration and/or has reservations with signing a death record. BVS recommends developing and cultivating a professional and amicable relationship with the physician and their support staff. Having a relationship with the physician and their staff tends to make it easier to reach the physician and address any concerns they may have. Several funeral directors agreed that speaking to the physician personally works very well; and if you can't reach them, speaking to their office manager is highly effective too. A couple funeral directors also recommended developing a relationship with the medical examiner office. Medical examiners and/or their investigative staff are usually willing to speak to physicians when they have questions regarding the cause of death.

Another suggestion was to ask for assistance from the local county vital statistics Chief Deputy Registrar (CDR). When a funeral director exhausts all their efforts in obtaining the cause of death, the CDR should be contacted and given all the details and documents gathered to prepare them for their conversation with the physician.

The Bureau of Vital Statistics tries to mitigate physician's reluctance to certify death records by educating them of their responsibilities and allaying their fears of litigation by citing rule section 64V-1.0061, Florida Administrative Code, that states "(3) A death certificate is prima facie proof of the fact, place, date, and time of death and identity of the decedent. A physician's signature and statement as to the cause of death does not constitute prima facie proof of the cause of death."

Certifiers tend to be less hesitant to sign the death certificate once they receive full understanding of their role in the death registration process and their statutory obligations. Fortunately, most death certificates are signed without hesitation by the certifying physicians. However, when funeral directors and/or physicians have questions or concerns regarding the death certificate, CDRs and the Bureau of Vital Statistics are available to help answer questions and can provide best strategies to employ. If you have an idea or strategy that you'd like to share, please don't hesitate to reach out to our Quality Assurance Section at 904-359-6900, ext. 9020.

VA Service-Connected Disability

This is a reminder that the Bureau of Vital Statistics EDRS (Electronic Death Registration System) allows funeral directors to notify certifying physicians that a decedent may have a service-connected disability. If the decedent's family has a VA service rating letter, then a notification letter may be printed from EDRS that can be faxed to the certifying physician. This notification letter reminds the physician to include any service-connected disability in the cause of death and/or contributing factors section of the death records. By including a service-connected disability on the death certificate, the veteran's spouse and/or other family member may be entitled to VA compensation and other benefits. If the service-connected condition was the underlying cause of death or a contributing factor in the veteran's death.

A brochure is available [here](#) and on the Department of Health's website: www.floridahealth.gov/certificates to distribute to funeral directors, families and physicians to help educate the deceased veteran's families and the physicians with identifying possible service related disabilities when filling out the cause of death medical certifications on death records. Proper completion of the death record will assist the veteran's family in obtaining benefits and compensation due to them.

Trending Now on **FLHealth**CHARTS

2018 Vital Statistics Data – Available Now!

Vital statistics data for 2018 are now available on FLHealthCHARTS.com. These data show that Florida is growing in population and in health. Several key indicators point to progress made in enhancing the quality of life across different parts of Florida's population, as well as, areas needing continued attention and improvement.



In 2018, Florida's population reached 20,957,706 residents, a 2.0 percent increase from 2017. In 2018, the racial distribution of the population was 77.4 percent white, 16.9 percent black and 5.7 percent other race. Hispanics comprised 25.7 percent of the population and Non-Hispanics 74.3 percent. A Florida resident born in 2018 can be expected to live 79.8 years, which is an increase of almost 9 years from the life expectancy in 1970.



In 2018, the number of live births among residents in Florida decreased from 2017 by 0.9 percent to 221,508. In 2018, Florida experienced a birth rate of 10.6 births per 1,000 population, which was a 2.8 percent decrease from 2017. The birth rate among black mothers was the highest at 13.7 births per 1,000 population. Hispanic mothers also experienced a birth rate higher than white mothers at 12.3 births per 1,000 population. The percent of births to mothers younger than 19 declined to 2.3 percent which was an 8.0 percent decline from 2017 and the lowest on record. Roughly 5.6 out of every 12 resident live births (46.3 percent) were to unwed mothers.

In 2018, fetal deaths, also known as stillbirths, decreased to 6.7 per 1,000 live births and fetal deaths. This represents a 2.9 percent decrease from 2017.



Florida's 2018 infant mortality rate decreased to 6.0 per 1,000 live births. This represents a decline of 1.6 percent since 2017. The resident infant mortality rate has dropped 37.5 percent since 1990 and is currently less than half the rate of 1980. The most frequent causes of resident infant deaths in 2018 were: 1) Perinatal Period Conditions (693 deaths), 2) Congenital Malformations (246 deaths), 3) Unintentional Injuries (Accidents) (110 deaths) and 4) Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) (69 deaths). These causes accounted for 83.8 percent of all resident infant deaths.

In 2018, Florida resident deaths increased to 205,461, a 1.0 percent increase from 2017. Heart disease was the leading cause of death in 2018, accounting for 46,929 deaths. Cancer was the second leading cause of death in 2018, accounting for 45,199 deaths.



The number of marriages in Florida decreased by 4.6 percent from 2017 (163,746 marriages) to 2018 (156,168 marriages). The marriage rate, per 1,000 population, decreased from 8.0 in 2017 to 7.5 in 2018. The month of March was the most popular month to wed with 15,146 marriages performed. Of the 77,054 dissolutions of marriage in 2018, over half (53.3 percent) did not affect any minor children.

Agencies Automatically Notified When a Death Occurs



Family members of a deceased individual many times will be at a loss as to who they need to contact to inform of their loved one's death. Some agencies receive their initial notification of the death via the death registration process. It is important for funeral homes, and county health department vital statistics staff to know which agencies are notified, so that they can inform the family who can then focus on other matters.

Even before the death record is registered the Social Security Administration (SSA) is usually advised of the death, electronically via the Bureau of Vital Statistics Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS). This allows the SSA to stop sending out benefits checks immediately and reduces the burden of notification on the family.

Both the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) as well as Voter Registration (VR) have a data usage agreement with Vital Statistics and receive a monthly data file that identifies those potentially on their rolls that need to be marked deceased, thereby, preventing potential fraud.

Through the registration of vital records statistical data are gathered and provided to the National Center for Health Statistics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The statistical data are used to determine the overall health of the county and state. Cause of death information can be valuable on a national level in identifying trends or emerging diseases that are having an impact on the state and nation. By the careful measurement of these data, programs can be developed to administer help where it is most needed.

Information and Services Available through Bureau of Vital Statistics

- For questions related to adoptions or the Florida Putative Father Registry, call the Adoption Unit at (904) 359-6900 ext. 9001.
- For issues dealing with paternity, or adding a parent to the birth record, contact the Paternity Unit at (904) 359-6900 ext. 9004.
- To correct demographic information on a birth or death record, or for information regarding the Legal Change of Name process, contact the Correction Unit at (904) 359-6900 ext. 9005.
- To correct medical information on a death record, contact the Medical Coding Unit at (904) 359-6900 ext. 9013.
- For information regarding an apostille or exemplified certificate, contact the Client Services Unit at 904-359-6900 ext. 9006.
- For information about ordering vital record events registered in Florida: Birth, Death, Marriage or Dissolution of Marriage, contact the Client Services Unit at (904) 359-6900 ext. 9000.
- To order through our only approved third party vendor using a credit card, contact VitalChek[®] Network at: <https://www.vitalchek.com/>. Order by phone or online through VitalChek[®] Network, our ONLY contracted vendor. **Please be cautious when ordering online, as there are many online vendors offering to assist clients with this simple process. VitalChek[®] Network is the only vendor with the ability to download orders directly to our agency.**



TO ADD YOUR NAME TO THE BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS

MAILING LIST, PLEASE CLICK [HERE](#).

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

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