

New fees for vital records effective January 1, 2016

What are the new fees? The basic fee for a certificate will be \$25. Fees for other services will also increase. A complete list of fees can be found at <http://1.usa.gov/1kCMRfo>. Answers to frequently asked questions about the increase are at <http://1.usa.gov/1NNoBh9>.

What are vital records? Vital records are the legal registration of a vital event. A vital event is a birth, marriage, divorce or death. Every vital event that occurs in Oregon must be recorded and permanently stored with the Center for Health Statistics, also known as Oregon Vital Records. Certified copies of the record are printed on special paper and are known as certificates — birth certificates, death certificates or marriage certificates.

Why are certificates important? A birth certificate is a legal document used to establish identity. It shows who you are, and when and where you were born. You need a birth certificate to enroll a child in school; to get a Social Security card, a driver's license or government benefits; or to apply for a passport.

The death certificate is the official legal record of death. A death certificate is needed to settle the affairs of your loved one. It has information about the person who died and the cause of their death. Insurance companies, the Social Security Administration and other agencies may ask for certified copies of the death certificate as proof of death.

Why do the fees need to increase? The last vital records fee increase was in 2003. The costs to support the state's vital records system have gone up over time, but revenue from fees has gone down. A fee increase is needed to maintain its current service level, as required by law.

How are the fees used? Fees for vital records support these services provided by state and county vital records offices:

- **Registering and storing vital records:**

Each vital event in Oregon is registered and stored with the state vital records office. Information comes from hospitals for births, funeral homes for deaths, county clerks for marriage and the courts for divorce. The state vital records office must make sure each vital record has complete and legal information, and is numbered and indexed so each one can be easily found. Any changes made to the records at any time must be documented and tracked. Currently, the state vital records office has more than six million vital records and adds about 128,000 each year. Many of the vital records are now registered and stored electronically. (*Continued on page 2.*)

- **Screening and processing orders for certificates:**

More than 170,000 orders for certificates are completed by Oregon Vital Records each year. County vital records offices can issue death and birth certificates for the first six months after the event. Vital records are confidential and access is limited to specific people for 100 years for birth records and 50 years for the other records. All orders are screened to make sure only persons that are eligible can get them. Screening also is a way to prevent fraud and identity theft.

- **Analyzing data from vital records:**

Some of the most important facts about the health of Oregonians come from vital records. Information about low birth weight babies and access to prenatal care is gathered from birth certificates. Death rates, life expectancy measures and information on leading causes of death come from death certificates.

For more information, go to <http://1.usa.gov/1NNoBh9> or call 971-673-1190.



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