Why are fingerprints used to sign records in the Oregon Vital Events Registration System (OVERS)?

- There are two reasons for use of fingerprints as the biometric measure.

  <u>Law</u> – Oregon needs to have a signature from a medical certifier for the cause of death. The fact of death and information on the cause of death creates legal rights and obligations for the family of the decedent, so the signatures of the funeral director and the medical certifier must be trusted to be that of the individual represented. To meet that need, Oregon chose to use two-factor authentication for electronic signatures on vital records. Two-factor authentication requires use of two of the three categories – *knowing* (passwords)*, having* (fobs, proximity cards, grid cards, etc.) and *being* (fingerprints, facial recognition, etc.)*.*

  <u>Commercial off-the-shelf system</u> – the OVERS system is a customized version of the Database Application for Vital Events. Oregon analyzed the cost-effectiveness of several options in 2002 before deciding to purchase a license for a commercial off-the-shelf system as the most cost effective method in 2005. However, this means we use the system as designed. OVERS currently has two factor authentication based on *knowing* the user name and password and *being* the right fingerprints. Fingerprints are never misplaced and do not need to be reissued on a periodic basis. Overall, it has been determined to be the most reliable and cost-effective biometric (*being*) measure.

- Does the system keep a copy of my fingerprints?

No. The biometric device that reads your finger 'signature' does not keep an actual image of your fingerprint. A reading of several fingerprint 'markers' is used to create a value known as a template, which is then stored on our server at the State Data Center (a secure facility). When you electronically sign a report of death, the 'markers' from your finger are read and then compared to the stored template to verify your identity. A fingerprint cannot be recreated from the stored markers because not every part of the fingerprint is recorded.

- How common is use of biometrics?

Today, very common. When we began using biometric signatures in 2006, it had been used for years in high security functions, but was still fairly new for broad use. Now biometrics are used for unlocking your telephone or cashing a check at your bank. Biometric signatures are used for 99% of Oregon's births since 2008 and for 85% of Oregon's deaths at the funeral home (23% of deaths for cause of death). The State Medical Examiner's office has successfully used OVERS since 2007 and OHSU began using in 2014. To date, Oregon has over 300,000 successful electronic signatures for vital records.

- How secure are these specific fingerprints?

Security was a critical design consideration for OVERS. It uses HyperText Transfer Protocol over SSL (HTTPS) to transfer encrypted data to the intended system. The fingerprint template is not stored on the individual biometric device, so there is no loss of security if the device is misplaced. The fingerprint templates are only saved on the OVERS servers which reside in the secure State Data Center along with other state mission-critical systems.

- Who can I contact for more information if I still have questions?

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