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News from the Center for Health Statistics exclusively for county vital records offices, registrars and their deputies

November 2014

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Faster, smarter, better...& less work for you

In Oregon, county staff know how to multi-task. With most county offices facing shrinking budgets, employees who issue vital records also work on other important county programs. Each program area has a unique set of regulations and procedures that employees must understand and follow to satisfy state requirements.

The good news is that there is a way for counties to do less work while also providing faster death record registration, faster amendments to death records, and better service to customers; all while keeping the same amount of revenue coming through the door. The magic solution? Fully electronic death records in OVERS.

In counties where funeral directors and medical certifiers are reporting deaths using OVERS, county offices are not spending valuable time reviewing, filing, amending and mailing paper or hybrid death records to the Center for Health Statistics. In Harney County for example, staff have successfully moved to almost 100% electronic death reporting by actively promoting OVERS. As a result, county staff rarely receive paper or hybrid death reports to file or amend, but they still continue to issue as many certified copies of death and birth records as they ever did.

If you work in a county where you receive a large number of fully paper and hybrid death reports to file and amend, there are a few simple strategies you can try to promote the electronic filing of death reports. To encourage funeral directors and medical certifiers to use OVERS, consider the following ideas:

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Faster, smarter, better (Continued from page 1)

1. Offer help getting started – For funeral directors and medical certifiers who have never used OVERS, a little assistance with getting a user account and some training could be enough to get them interested. The state office offers a variety of support services to help them get started.

- Point them to the state website for a copy of the OVERS enrollment form (or print copies of the OVERS enrollment form from the website and give them to interested professionals). Enrollment forms are located at <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/overs/Pages/NewUsers.aspx> ;
- Let medical certifiers know that the state website offers a 20 minute demonstration of OVERS <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/overs/Pages/SPTTrain.aspx> ;
- For funeral directors, live training is available by contacting Kerry Lionadh, the OVERS training coordinator at 971-673-1197.

2. Explain benefits to funeral director and family - If you receive a large number of fully paper reports, encourage funeral directors to use OVERS by explaining the benefits of electronic

records for the family and for the funeral director. Benefits include:

- Faster death certificates (registered an average of 17 days faster);
- Fewer errors requiring less amendments;
- Electronic amendments approved faster (usually in 24 hours).

3. Explain benefits to medical certifier - In counties where the majority of death reports are hybrid, the medical certifiers are the best people to contact about using OVERS. Benefits for medical certifiers include:

- Built-in error checking means you have fewer amendments to complete.
- Better care for families of deceased patients (death certificates registered an average of 17 days faster)
- Faster response to diseases that pose a threat to public health.

Electronic death reporting makes a huge difference for families who've lost a loved one and improves public health officials' ability to control emerging health issues that affect public health. Your partnership in spreading the word about the benefits of electronic reporting will have a positive impact on the lives of people who live in your community. If you would like to take a more active role in promoting electronic death registration, brochures and other marketing materials are available at the state office. To order a supply of brochures for your office, contact Kerry Lionadh at kerry.l.lionadh@state.or.us . ❖

Where can I get information about Home Burial Packets?

We are seeing more people each year who want someone other than a funeral home take care of their own or family member's final arrangements, including completion of the death report. Essentially they are acting

as a funeral service practitioner and must follow the laws related to completion of a death report. The Center for Health Statistics has a packet of information for people who

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Home Burial Packets (Continued from page 2)

want to act as a funeral service practitioner. We refer to this as the Home Burial Packet because there is often a desire to bury on private property. We hope this article will answer some of your questions.

Who can request a Home Burial Packet?

A Home Burial Packet should be requested by a family member accepting the responsibility of acting as a funeral service practitioner, and is the family member who will be completing the Oregon Death Certificate without the assistance of a funeral home.



Before making the decision to act as a funeral service practitioner, the family member should review the time sensitive responsibilities of this role.

Where can a person acting as a funeral service practitioner receive or get information about a Home Burial Packet?

When the county vital records office staff receive questions about home burials, please refer these inquiries to our office. Inquiries may be directed to Lynda Jackson at lynda.l.jackson@state.or.us or at 971-673-1164. Lynda will be able to provide general information about home burials and/or if necessary a home-burial packet.

When should a person acting as a funeral service practitioner call and order a Home Burial Packet?

If a person is in hospice, or has been told that death is imminent the person acting as a funeral service practitioner should call our office. Do not wait until the death has occurred.

It is important that we receive the call in a timely manner so that the person acting as a funeral service practitioner can comply with Oregon law pertaining to compulsory filing of death certificates which includes time-sensitive information. They can be referred to [ORS 432.133 Mandatory submission and registration of reports of death; persons required to report.](#)

What is included in the Home Burial Packet? (Links are provided for your review)

- An Oregon Death Certificate. The person acting as a funeral service practitioner completes the personal data on the death certificate and gives the certificate to the medical certifier within 48 hours of death.
- The [Instructions for completing the Death Certificate](#) which includes time sensitive information.
- An Identification Tag. In accordance with [ORS 692.405](#) and [OAR 830-030-0000\(4\)](#), an identifying metal disc must be attached to the receptacle containing human remains. The number on the identifying metal disc is placed on the upper left hand corner of the death certificate.
- [Facts About Funeral and Cemetery Arrangements](#) brochure provided by the Oregon Mortuary and Cemetery Board. If you have any question regarding information found in the brochure, please contact the [Oregon Cemetery Mortuary Board](#) at 971-673-1500 or go to their homepage.
- A [Fact Sheet on the Burial of Human Remains on Private Property](#) provided by the Oregon Mortuary and Cemetery Board. If you have any questions

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Home Burial Packets (Continued from page 3)

regarding the fact sheet, please contact the Oregon Cemetery Mortuary Board at 971-673-1500 or go to their homepage.

- A 24 Hour Notice of Receipt of Body card. This card must be sent to the registrar in the county in which the death occurred within 24 hours of

taking possession of the body. If you need an electronic version of the 24 Hour Notice of Receipt of Body card, contact Eddy Conrad-Wiggins at 971-673-1180.

If you have any additional questions, or have someone come into your office with questions not covered in this article, please contact Lynda Jackson at 971-673-1164 or via email at lynda.l.jackson@state.or.us. ❖

Amending the Name of the Funeral Home

Occasionally, the county vital records office may be asked to amend the name of the funeral home appearing on a report of death (death certificate). Under limited circumstances, this amendment can be made at the county vital records office if the death record is not yet registered.

Only the funeral director who signed the record can request this amendment

The funeral director is responsible for the record. The new funeral home has no legal authority for the record prior to the amendment and cannot request the change. The old funeral home does not have the right to transfer its obligations, including accuracy of data, storage of business records, and payment of the \$20 filing fee without the consent of the new funeral home. The funeral director should only request this amendment with the consent of both funeral homes.

County offices can only amend the funeral home at initial registration based on a paper affidavit

Counties can amend the name of the funeral home before the record is registered and the first certified copies are issued for fully paper death records. The amendment requires a paper affidavit and the record

must have a footnote documenting the change.

Certified copies can only be ordered by and billed to the new funeral home or the funeral director who signed the record. The funeral home removed from the record cannot order records or pay for certified copies (should not invoice for certified copies) because they no longer have any authority for the record.

What does the amendment mean?

Once the amendment is made:

- the new funeral home appears on the record with a footnote on the change;
- the new funeral home will be billed for the \$20 filing fee - this is an automated process based on the funeral home on the record;
- the funeral director who signed the record and the new funeral home can request amendments;
- the new funeral home should be expected to comply with Oregon law relating to retention of documents (Mortuary and Cemetery Board), as the funeral home of record;
- the new funeral home will be contacted

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by the state office if there are any questions or required amendments, including veterans' combat status.

Requests to amend after the record is registered

Requests to amend the funeral home after the record is registered, even when the original is still at the county office, should be referred to Patty Thompson, Amendment Specialist. She can be contacted by email Patricia.A.Thompson@state.or.us or telephone at 971-673-1163. Patty is the best

Marital Status and Spouse's Name Amendments

On January 1, 2014 a new Administrative Rule, [OAR 333-011-0300](#), went into effect. This rule defines allowable amendments to marital status and spouse's name on death records.

When the amendment removes or adds a spouse's name it results in the addition or loss of legal rights to the spouse; so fraud can be an issue.

This new rule takes the burden of evaluating evidence and resolving family disputes away from funeral directors and vital record offices and puts it solely in the hands of the informant. If the informant does not agree to the change to the record, a court order is required to make the change.

What should county offices do when they receive an amendment to marital status or the spouse's name? Counties can continue to process affidavits to correct spelling errors,

Administrative Rule, [OAR 333-011-0300](#) takes the burden of evaluating evidence and resolving family disputes away from funeral directors and vital record offices and puts it solely in the hands of the informant.

resource for questions on amending personal information on death records.

Changing the funeral home in OVERS

The funeral home associated with the record can only be changed before printing for a hybrid record and before registration for a fully electronic record. There are two ways to do this:

- one funeral home can relinquish the case and another funeral home take ownership; or
- the OVERS help desk can transfer ownership of personal information from one funeral home to another. ❖

for example, changing Pattersen to Patterson or Linda to Lynda. However do not process amendments that change the spouse's name, for instance from Patterson to Peterson or Larry to Lawrence, which changes the spouse's identity. Any affidavits your office receives that changes marital status from married to widowed, changes a spouse's name or adds a spouse's name, should be sent to the State for processing. These amendments may require evidence documents in addition to the affidavit.

A special edition of the [Death Newsletter](#) issued in November 2013 outlined rule [OAR 333-011-0330](#) and included a diagram of amendment processes. Please see this article for additional information. The article can be located on our website at: <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/Pages/DeathNews.aspx>.

If you have questions about an affidavit your office receives, contact Patty Thompson at 971-673-1163 or by email at patricia.a.thompson@state.or.us. ❖

Handling Replacement Requests

How can you handle requests for replacements when customers have not received certificates?

- Before making a replacement, check date of event to make sure it is within six months from date of event;
- If record is more than six months old and the record was issued less than a year ago, the state office can issue a courtesy replacement for the customer;
- Forward a copy of the order form with applicant information, address, number of copies, payment received, and photocopy of ID;
- **Make sure the mailing address on the form is still accurate;**
- Attach a cover note explaining why a replacement copy is needed and confirm that the county cannot issue the replacement.

How can you handle replacement requests when certificates are returned after correction?

- If the record is less than six months old, issue replacements and request state office to void the returned certificates;
- If record is more than six months old, attach certificates to your request to the state for courtesy replacements. Do not void and shred certificates that need to be forwarded to the state office for replacement. They will be voided after replacement.

General processing steps:

Registering death records – The big picture

The process of turning a report of a vital event into an official record that legally documents that vital event is known as

- If the customer reports that they did not receive the certificates that were mailed to them, the post office has not returned the certificates and it has been over 6 months, fax the replacement request to the state office with an explanation to 971-673-1203.
- We recommend adding a comment to the original order in OVERS to document that you requested the state office to send a replacement and the reason, in case you get a follow up call about the order.
- To check on if/when records have been replaced, review issuances in Event and Issuance History.
- To minimize the production of replacements, keep returned mail from the post office and certificates not picked up in a secure location ready for release. They can be organized by the name on the record. The state office retains returned mail and records that are not released for two years. If the customer calls with a new address, or calls saying they are coming in to pick the record up, you will be able to locate the record and release it without making a new record.
- To make replacement of death records easier, you should see a new service for short form death record replacement (no fee) in OVERS. In the future we plan to add a short form death replacement (with fee) service as well. ❖

Registration. You might be interested to know that death records are the only type of

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Registering death records (Continued from page 6)

Oregon vital records filed at the local county vital records office before being registered at the state office. Explaining why death records are filed at the county before being registered at the state office requires a review of the history of Oregon vital records law and a description of the evolution of vital records processes that we will leave for another time. The focus of this article is to describe the state-level registration process that occurs after the county office files and mails the original report of death to the Center for Health Statistics (CHS).

At CHS, there are two basic steps involved in registering a report of death: data entry and registration approval. Some death records are accompanied by an amendment affidavit. For those records, a third step in the process is involved. That step is called amendment approval.

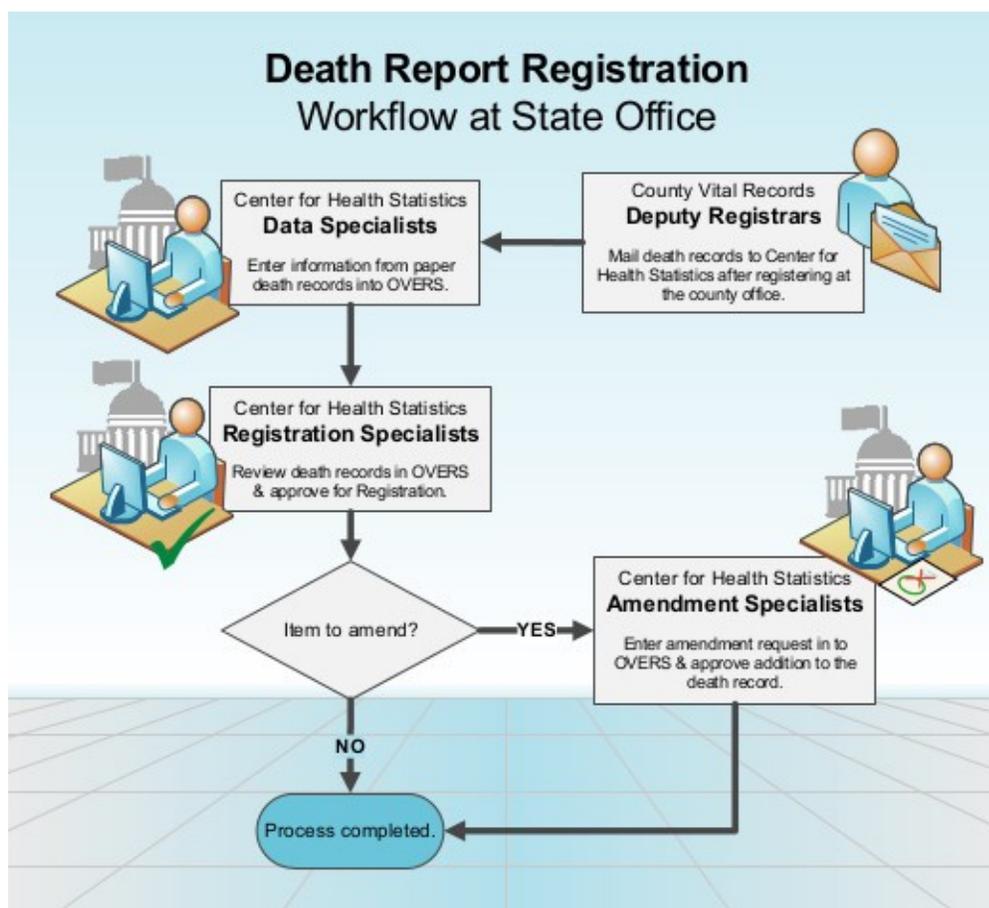
Step 1: Data Entry of county-filed death records –Death records received in the mail from county offices are date stamped, separated by format (hybrid and fully paper), and sorted into small batches. The batches are then distributed among the team members who enter the data from the death reports into the Oregon Vital Events Registration System (OVERS).

Step 2: Registration approval of county-filed death records - The five members of the State registration team who review the electronic version of the death report as it appears in OVERS, approve or reject the record for State registration. When approved, the record is assigned a State File Number (SFN). The addition of the SFN indicates the record is a legally sufficient document and is available for issuance from OVERS.

Step 3: Amendment approval of death records - When a registered death record requires an amendment, the death amendment specialist reviews the amendment request (submitted by paper affidavit or electronically via OVERS), approves or rejects the amendment based on legal validity of the request, and updates the death record to reflect the approved change.

Each unit of the State Registration team follows specific guidelines for quality, accuracy and timeliness outlined in Federal law, State law and in our contracts with the National Center for Health Statistics. This simplified description of the process does not do justice to the complexity of the work they do nor does it describe the level of knowledge, attention to detail and technical proficiency required of the team to produce accurate records in a timeframe that meets our legal and contractual obligations.

For a more personal view of the work involved in registering death records, we will provide a profile of each unit of the registration team in a series of articles we are calling “Vital Records Work”. To learn more about the people who do the first step of the process, receiving death records from the county and entering the data into OVERS, we invite you to read the following article. ❖



Vital records work – data entry of county-filed death records

This article is the first in a series highlighting staff at the Center for Health Statistics who contribute to the process of registering and amending death records.

The role of preparing county-filed death records for registration approval at the Center for Health Statistics requires attention to detail and an ability to balance data entry speed with accuracy. The data entry team who enter death and birth record data into OVERS also use two other electronic data systems to enter data for five additional types of vital records (including marriage, divorce, and three others). Working with so many types of records and different data systems requires a high level of technical skill as well as knowledge of the different laws and rules that apply to each record type.

Our main data entry person has been performing her job duties for an impressive 14 years and assists in the training of new members of the team. All team members perform a variety of tasks in the office in addition to data entry. Collectively the data entry team records information for about 76,000 vital events each year, approximately 290 per day. With so much work to do, the team has adopted strategies to stay motivated, such as, frequent collaboration, good communication and an understanding of the big picture

To help the team focus on the big picture, the Registration Manager and Data Entry Supervisor, JoAnn Jackson and Cynthia Roeser involve the team in setting goals for quality and timeliness based on legal and contractual obligations. “An important part

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Data entry of death records (Continued from page 8)

of the big picture is our contract with the National Center for Health Statistics”, stated JoAnn Jackson. “Our contract with NCHS holds us to specific standards for accuracy and completeness and also specifies the timeframe we must complete the records. Oregon is very successful at meeting the NCHS requirements every year, because every team member understands the importance of meeting our contractual obligations and makes a great effort to do fast and accurate work”, she said.

Another part of the big picture that motivates the team to strive for continual improvement is remembering that, “these are not just records, they are records of people’s lives”, as team member Chris Bass stated. Knowing that a real person’s life is

affected by how quickly and accurately a record is entered provides powerful motivation and at times it can be emotionally overwhelming. “When you look at a lot of death records for much of each day it can start to wear on you and that’s when it helps to talk to a team member who understands how tough it can be. Our team has a close working relationship because we look out for one another”, said team member Jill Janisse.

Vital records data entry requires skill, focus, attention to detail and a broad understanding of vital records laws and rules. It requires a team who takes their jobs seriously and cares about doing quality work. CHS has such a team. A team that understands theirs is a professional job which impacts the lives of others. ❖

Wanted—Newsletter topics

Have a question or idea for a future newsletter article? Contact Judy Shioishi at 971-673-1166 or judy.shioishi@state.or.us. Judy collects ideas for articles and then shares them with the writing team.

Thank you to the contributors of this newsletter: Krista Markwardt, Cynthia Roeser, Kerry Lionadh, Karen Rangan, Lynda Jackson, Carol Sanders, Patty Thompson, Karen Hampton, JoAnn Jackson, Jennifer Woodward.

We're just a phone call away

Have a question? Try asking one of the helpful CHS staff listed below.

Frequent Contacts

| | |
|--|---|
| Field Liaison Judy Shioishi 971-673-1166 | Delayed Filings Becki Buskirk 971-673-1147 |
| Paternities Debbie Gott 971-673-1155 | Filiations Tony Bojanowski 971-673-1143 |
| Birth Corrections <1 year, Amanda Vega 971-673-1169 | Adoptions Debbie Draghia 971-673-1152 |
| 1+year, Johanna Collins 971-673-1137 | Security Paper/Voids Karen Wagner 971-673-1193 |
| Death Corrections Patty Thompson 971-673-1163 | OVERS Helpdesk 971-673-0279 |

CHS Managers

| | |
|--|---|
| State Registrar Jennifer Woodward 971-673-1185 | Data Processing Supervisor Cynthia Roeser 971-673-0478 |
| Amendments/Certification Manager Carol Sanders 971-673-1178 | Certification Supervisor Karen Rangan 971-673-1182 |
| Statistics Manager Joyce Grant-Worley 971-673-1156 | |
| Registration Manager JoAnn Jackson 971-673-1160 | |
| OVERS Manager Karen Hampton 971-673-1191 | |

The Center for Health Statistics' office is located at:

800 N.E. Oregon St.,
Suite 225
Portland, OR 97232-2187

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 14050
Portland, OR 97293-0050

General information: 971-673-1180
Order vital records: 1-888-896-4988

Website: <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates>

OVERS website: <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/overs/Pages/index.aspx>

