



Matters of Record

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

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The county newsletter is dedicated to the review of Oregon laws, rules and procedures that guide the work of commissioned county vital records staff. In this issue we highlight the duties of county registrars and deputy registrars with a special focus on out-of-county births as well as rules for issuing and amending vital records.

County registrar and deputy registrar staff duties

A county registrar is essential to the daily operations of the county vital records office. We at the State Center for Health Statistics could not function without our partnership with you and we truly value you as colleagues. The duties outlined in this article are essential functions to be performed in every county.

County official - Each county determines who within their structure will be responsible for appointing the county registrar (for example, the county public health director or the county registrar’s supervisor). Any gap between registrars would create a lack of authority to register, issue or make amendments at the county office so the registrar position must be filled at all times. The county official is responsible for informing the state registrar of any changes to the county registrar position.

Questions or Comments?

JoAnn Jackson
 Registration Manager
 971-673-1160
JoAnn.jackson@state.or.us

Judy Shioishi
 Vital Records Field Liaison
 971-673-1166
Judy.shioishi@state.or.us



County registrar – The county registrar is the only county employee who can appoint a deputy registrar. The county registrar is also the only county employee who can notify the state registrar of deputy registrar appointments and terminations.

County and deputy registrars are commissioned by the state registrar. Only commissioned and trained county staff may register or issue vital records. Both the county registrar and deputy registrar may maintain the physical security of all vital records, abstracts, databases, and intaglio paper used to produce certified copies of vital records.

Paper records and intaglio paper should be kept in a locked container (drawer, cabinet, desk, or office) at night, and should only be available to County vital records staff during work hours. Electronic files or databases must be secure including use of passwords and limited access directories.

Track all orders for vital records using OVERS. By entering all orders for birth and death certificates into OVERS, counties will be able to comply with all required elements of tracking orders.

Issue certified copies of birth and death certificates within six months of the date of the event. By entering all orders for birth and death certificates into OVERS, counties will be able to comply with all required elements of tracking orders.

Charge fees for vital record services. The fees must be the same as the state fees.

Support submission of Voluntary Acknowledgement of Paternity Affidavit – Form 45-21. Make sure parents hear the rights and responsibilities statement and assist them in obtaining notarization. Send the form with or

without the appropriate fee to the Center for Health Statistics for acceptance and processing.



Assist OVERS users who sign birth or death records by enrolling their biometric “fingerprint” templates. Signers include funeral directors, medical certifiers, birth clerks, and midwives throughout the state. This is an important service to local data providers of vital records.

Maintain public abstracts of deaths in the county office for a minimum of two years from the date of death. Counties may charge their customary public record fees for copies of the abstract information on plain white paper. Participate in the triennial review of vital records operations. This review is a valuable opportunity for state and local vital records staff to meet and exchange information.

Follow all instructions from the state registrar. Periodically the state registrar will issue instructions on procedures or other expectations related to vital records. County vital records staff are expected to follow all instructions whether delivered through newsletters, emails or instructional memorandums.

**Oregon Administrative Rules
333-011-0106(Fees)**

- (1) The fee for a full certified copy of a vital statistics record or for an abbreviated birth or death certificate shall be \$20. Additional copies of each record ordered at the same time shall have a fee of \$15. per certificate; and
- (16) A flat fee of \$20 shall be paid for the replacement of certified copies when the original documents are returned within a year of issuance with an acceptable, correction document and appropriate amendment fee. This fee may be waived when fewer than four certified copies are being replaced.

Promptly notify the state registrar of staff turnover

Is new staff joining your office? Is staff leaving your office?

If so, your county registrar needs to notify the state registrar in writing when employees in the county registrar or deputy registrar positions change. The only person who may appoint a county registrar is either the county public health director or the county registrar’s supervisor. The county registrar is the only person who may appoint a deputy registrar.

When you hire a new county registrar or deputy registrar:

- Promptly notify the state registrar, Jennifer A. Woodward, Ph.D. of the change by faxing, emailing, or writing a letter on official county letterhead. Include the new employee’s name, position title, start date, email, telephone number and fax number.
- Enroll the new employee to use the Oregon Vital Events Registration System (OVERS) by submitting an enrollment form. (An enrollment form can be obtained from the Center for Health Statistics website <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/overs/status.shtm> l#Accessing_OVERS).
- Arrange training for the incoming employee, if new to vital records.
- For new county registrars you should determine whether new security/intaglio paper is required and if so, order it.

Remember: *Records issued during a period of time when no registrar is appointed are legally invalid.*

Paternity report



Paternity means legally establishing the father of a child. Most births in Oregon occur to married mothers. For those children, paternity is established through a legal presumption that the husband of a woman is the father of her child. But more than one-third of the children born in Oregon are born to unmarried mothers. For these children, paternity cannot be established without additional action. An acknowledgment of paternity (AOP) signed at the birth facility is the easiest, fastest, and least expensive way to have the father added to the record.

Having the father on the birth certificate is important for many reasons:

- Provides the identity of the father to the child, now and in later life.
- Father has the full rights of a legal parent and the paternal grandparents have the same rights as the maternal grandparents.
- Financial support for the child, including medical insurance, child support, and other benefits will be more readily available to the child.

Paternity is also an important issue for Oregon. The number of paternitys established affects the federal funding received for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Paternity must be established for 90 percent of the births to unmarried mothers for Oregon to qualify for the current funding for the TANF program. If we fail to do so, Oregon loses a large amount of money for a program that serves a great need.

Cooperation between counties creates stronger public health programs

Sharing information between the county of residence and the county of occurrence is an essential aspect of supporting a healthy Oregon population. In particular, providing services to newborn residents born outside their county of residence is worthy of collaboration between the two counties.



We understand sharing information with other counties takes time and time is a precious commodity when county resources are stretched thin. In the future, if funding allows, the Center for Health Statistics would like OVERS to include the ability for the county of residence to access resident's birth records for births that occur out-of-county. With the release of the OVERS birth module in 2008, the State assumed responsibility for the tasks of registering and amending all birth records including review for sufficiency and paternity acknowledgment acceptance. While counties still continue to issue birth certificates for the first six months after the event as allowed by law, the time freed up by no longer registering and amending records should help county staff find more time for sharing information with other counties.

The Center for Health Statistics sends paper reports to the County offices each week that list the counties where your resident's births occurred. To collect the information on out-of-county births for your county residents:

1. Review the weekly report for any out-of-county births.
2. Contact the county where the birth occurred and ask them to pull the statistical copy of the birth record from OVERS.

3. They will either print and mail or fax it to you, or save it as a PDF and attach it to a secure email.

The statistical copy includes all of the information needed to identify the child and mother, contact the mother or determine the health or service needs of the child.

Local public health agencies are allowed by law to use the information on birth records for public health purposes. Cooperation between counties in accessing resident information is essential to a strong public health program in Oregon. We appreciate your efforts in sharing copies of birth records with other counties.

When to issue vital records

The method and timing for issuing vital records differs by event and record type.

Births

All births are registered at the state office. Certified copies must be created through OVERS at all times.

- Create an order in OVERS and search for the child.
- The registrant (child) must be matched to a birth record before issuance will be available.
- Never override an edit that tells you the birth record isn't registered.
- Check the status information in the middle of the summary page of the order to see if any limitations on issuance exist.

The most common limitations are holds and amendments pending. (Detailed information on status was included in the Winter 2009 issue and can be found at <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/chs/registration/regnewsletters.shtml#mattersofcount y>.)

- Never change the information on the birth record. Refer parents to the birth facility or the Center for Health Statistics office if corrections are needed.
- If the record isn't registered, do not void the order. Write the order number on the application form and check back for availability after the appropriate amount of time. You can then search by order number and use the existing order, saving time on re-keying the order information.

Timing – Most births to married mothers and unmarried mothers who did not sign a paternity acknowledgment are registered within one working day of being certified by the birth clerk. Records of births to unmarried mothers who did sign a paternity acknowledgment can't be registered until the paternity form is received and reviewed at the state office. This usually occurs within two weeks of birth, but depends on when the facility mails the paternity form.

Amendments – Most amendment requests are electronic and can be approved within one working day. Amendments that are faxed or sent by mail take longer, usually one to two weeks. Do not issue certified copies if an amendment is pending.

Deaths

Death records are more complicated because of the variety of record sources. However, the first step is the same. For all records

- Create an order in OVERS and search for the decedent.

Fully electronic Around 15 percent of Oregon's records are fully electronic. These records are similar to births in that they are registered at the State vital records office and can only be issued from OVERS.

- The decedent must be matched to the death record before issuance will be available.

- Never override an edit that tells you the death record isn't registered for a fully electronic record.
- Check the status information in the middle of the summary page of the order to see if any limitations on issuance exist. The most common limitations are due to the record being referred to ME or because an amendment is pending. (Detailed information on status was included in the Winter 2009 issue and can be found at <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/chs/registration/regnewsletters.shtml#mattersofcounty>).
- Certified copies can then be issued from the OVERS system.

Hybrid (Drop to paper) Around 60 percent of Oregon's records are hybrid. These records are started in EDRS, then printed for the medical certifier on the 45-2DP form. These records can be registered and amended at the county vital records office while the original record is in your possession.

- The decedent should be matched to the death record on the order. This allows the order history for the record to be complete.
- You will see an edit that tells you the death record isn't registered. You will not need to override the edit, but it is a reminder to issue only when you have the original record in hand. Do not issue from a photocopy of a hybrid record after the original record has been sent to the state for registration. Additional corrections might occur after you send the original to the state and certified copies issued could be incorrect.
- Certified copies can be made from the original paper record while it is in your possession.

Fully paper Less than 25 percent of Oregon's records are fully paper, with both the funeral

home and medical certifier completing the paper (45-2) form. These records can be registered and amended at the county vital records office while the original is in your possession.

- The order must be created using OVERS and the decedent must be searched to proceed with the order. Select "no match" and save for a fully paper record.
- You will need to override an edit that tells you the death record isn't matched (OP0033). Do so only when you have the original record in hand. Never override this edit after the original record has been

sent to the state for registration.

Additional corrections might occur after you send the original to the state and certified copies issued could be incorrect.

- Certified copies can be made from the original paper record while it is in your possession.

For any event and record type, if you have any questions about whether it is appropriate to issue certified copies, please call the State vital records office.

What is the triennial review?

The triennial review is conducted once every three years with the purpose of determining if county health departments are in compliance with state law, rules and procedures. It also provides an opportunity for our team to further build relationships and strengthen communication by fostering an environment for asking questions and receiving clarifications.



The Center for Health Statistics conducts the vital records portion of the review. The vital records review includes an evaluation of county requirements for registration of records, issuance of records, document security and confidentiality of vital records. The results of the review including commendations, compliance findings, and recommendations are communicated to the local public health authority and the county health administrator. The vital records liaison, Judy Shioishi, conducts this review.

Thank you to the editor and writers who contributed to this newsletter:

Karen Hampton, Lynda Jackson, Kerry Lionadh, Carol Sanders, Judy Shioishi and Jennifer Woodward.



DESK REFERENCE GUIDE

Reduce errors in amending records – A list of helpful hints

- ▶ Add footnotes and amend death records only prior to registration if the original paper or hybrid certificates are in your possession and you have received a correction affidavit. (If amendments need to be made to registered death certificates, they will be done at the state level).
- ▶ To amend a record, white out the item in error, neatly type in new information and add a footnote in appropriate box documenting the change.
- ▶ Use this format for footnotes: “Mother’s last name formerly Jones corr. by F. Dir. Affid. Mar 22, 2010, Jane Doe, Co Reg. cr” (Footnote includes name of item amended, former information, abbreviation of correction by Funeral Director, date of amendment, county registrar name and initials of person amending record).
- ▶ Type the footnote neatly at the very top of the footnote space but not on the outline of the space, abbreviating as appropriate to conserve space. **Footnotes for Date of Death and all personal information, including Place of Death go into the top footnote space. Footnotes for all other changes to medical information go into the lower footnote space.**
- ▶ Look for white out. Request correction affidavits for any change to personal information or medical information made with white out. **Ideally, the funeral home retypes the top portion of the death certificate, rather than using white out and sending a correction affidavit.**
- ▶ Require an original signature from a medical certifier to change cause of death information. Accept no faxes or affidavits from funeral directors to make changes to cause of death, date or time of death or other medical information.
- ▶ Do not amend photocopies of death records—only the original death record.
- ▶ Do not make corrections to SSNs unless Funeral Director has confirmed that the number failed the SSA verification step.
- ▶ Do not request hospital staff to make corrections to birth records if the changes cannot be verified from birth work sheets or medical records. This prevents fraudulent changes to birth records. The state office will make all corrections to birth certificates.

If you have questions about amending records, please call Patty Thompson at 971-673-1163 for death record corrections or Amanda Vega at 971-673-1169 for birth record correction.



Important CHS Contact Information

Paternities

Debbie Gott
971-673-1155

Filiations

Tony Bojanowski
971-673-1143

Adoptions

Debbie Draghia
971-673-1152

OVERS Helpdesk

971-673-0279

Delayed Filings

Becki Buskirk
971-673-1147

Birth Corrections

<1 year, Amanda Vega
971-673-1169
1 + years, Johanna Collins
971-673-1137

Death Corrections

Patty Thompson
971-673-1163

State Registrar

Jennifer Woodward
971-673-1185

Amendments/Certification Manager

Carol Sanders
971-673-1178

Data Processing Supervisor

Cynthia Roeser
971-673-0478

Registration Manager

JoAnn Jackson
971-673-1160

Statistics Manager

Joyce Grant-Worley
971-673-1156

OVERS Manager

Karen Hampton
971-673-1191

Paternity Information on the Web at:

<http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/chs/change/paternityfaqs.shtml>

OVERS Information on the Web at:

<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/overs/>

Center for Health Statistics:

<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/chs/index.shtml>

**Center for Health Statistics
800 N.E. Oregon St., Suite 225
Portland, OR 97232-1201**