



Matters of Record

News from the Center for Health Statistics Concerning the Oregon Death Certificate

Issue: March 2011

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The Oregon Health Authority has arrived

In this edition, you may notice our new Oregon Health Authority (OHA) logo. The State of Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) is transitioning into two separate agencies, DHS and the OHA. This transition is taking place gradually and will be completed by July 2011. The death certificate form will change to include the new Oregon Health Authority name in place of DHS.

The Center for Health Statistics, under the Oregon Public Health Division, will now be part of the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). OHA was created by the 2009 Oregon legislature to bring most health-related programs in the state, such as the Public Health Division, Addictions and Mental Health Division, Division of Medical Assistance Programs and the Public Employees Benefits Board, into a single agency.

The changes will not disrupt our relationship with our funeral director partners or our services to clients. To learn more about the OHA, visit www.oregon.gov/OHA ❖

Doctor's self-paced guide to using OVERS

Self-paced training for doctors who complete death certificates electronically is now available via the Internet, giving them quick answers to their most common questions. The new training is interactive so doctors can follow and interact with the content from any computer with an internet connection at anytime of the day or night.

You can check out the training, too! It is available on the State website at <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/overs/Pages/SPTrain.aspx> ❖



Do I need to submit a 721 form when using OVERS?

You do not need to submit a 721 form when using OVERS because the OVERS application sends electronic notification to the Social Security Administration (SSA).

When you click the *Verify SSN* link on the first page of the death record in OVERS, the application communicates with the SSA database to verify that the first and last name, gender, month and year of birth fields match the information the social security office has on file for the associated social security number.

When all information matches what is on file with the SSA office, you will receive a message of *Passed*. If the information you entered does not match what SSA has on file, you will receive one of the following messages:

Fail Name – Either the first or last name is different than what is on record at SSA.

Fail DOB – The month or year of the decedent's date of birth does not match what is on record.

Fail Gender – The gender of the decedent does not match what is on record.

If you receive any of the above messages, you should verify that the information you have entered is correct, with no misspellings. You may also want to confirm with the informant that the information you were provided is correct. If, after ensuring that the information you have is accurate to the best of your knowledge, you still receive one of the error messages listed above, there is nothing more you can do. You are given five chances to verify the SSN, and after five attempts you can no longer click the *Verify SSN* link. This will not prevent you from

completing the rest of the record and no more follow-up with the SSA is required from you. For records that do not pass the SSN verification process, the SSA will investigate the discrepancy and make corrections to the information in their database, if necessary.



Other error messages you may receive next to the *verify SSN* link are:

Pending – Verifications are not being sent or received from OVERS to SSA. These requests will remain in a queue until the connection between the two systems has been restored.

Sys Error – Network connection between OVERS and SSA is not available and you will be unable to send requests to SSA until network connectivity has been re-established. Once network connectivity is re-established, resend the verification.

As with every online system, the SSA database will periodically shut down for maintenance. While maintenance is being performed, you will be able to submit *Verify SSN* requests, but they will be placed in a *pending* status until the system is back online. During these occurrences, the Center for Health Statistics will send out

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notification informing you when the SSA database will be down and for how long.

These maintenance periods are typically scheduled over the weekend when possible. In some instances funeral homes are contacted by their local social security office requesting that they send in a 721 form, even

Complete injury reporting is critical to improving public health

The medical certifier should complete injury information anytime a fall and/or other injury is related to the chain of events that results in death. This includes falls by elderly persons either before or after going to a hospital, nursing home, or hospice. Injuries also include overdoses of over the counter or prescription medications, or alcohol poisoning. The medical certifier contacts the Medical Examiner's office as soon as possible whenever an injury is known so the Medical Examiner can determine whether to take control of the case.

Death certificates are a very valuable source of information for improving public health practice because they are collected on *all* deaths in the United States. To create an accurate picture of the causes of mortality in the United States, Oregon and each county, it is important that death certificates include all available information on injuries that, in the medical opinion of the certifier, contributed to death.

A funeral director should never ask a medical certifier to omit or change information included in the cause of death to avoid a Medical Examiner referral. Medical certifiers should consider not just the age of the injury, but other factors as well. Injuries from auto accidents that occurred 20 years ago may be relevant to a complete

though they are using OVERS and have clicked the *Verify SSN* link.

If you should receive a similar call, instruct the individual you are speaking with that you are using the OVERS application and have taken the proper steps to notify the SSA office of the death. If they have any questions regarding this process, instruct them to contact the regional Social Security office. ❖

description of the cause of death, as could a fall by an elderly person prior to contracting pneumonia.

Though Oregon law requires the Medical Examiner to investigate and certify deaths that occur under suspicious or unknown circumstances (ORS 146.090), the Medical Examiner decides whether to accept a case. When the Medical Examiner accepts a case, he or she completes the cause of death information and, if relevant, the injury information, as well as signs and dates the death certificate.

When the Medical

Examiner declines to investigate a case and complete the death certificate, a medical certifier must complete the death certificate as fully as possible. This must include any injury information in the cause of death section and on the injury page. The medical certifier should use their own medical judgment in reporting the chain of events that resulted in death.

If a Medical Examiner becomes aware of a death involving an injury and they want the death certificate to be changed, he or she should complete a replacement death certificate rather than requiring the medical certifier to change the original information.

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Injury Reporting (Continued from page 3)

If a Medical Examiner becomes aware of a death involving an injury and they want the death certificate to be changed, he or she should complete a replacement death certificate rather than requiring the medical certifier to change the original information.

Oregon law states that the Medical Examiner shall investigate deaths that are apparently accidental or follow an injury. However, if the Medical Examiner declines to accept the case, the injury information is still required and should be as complete as possible. If

Online obituaries can be a source for identity theft

The internet has opened new worlds. The opportunity to show pictures and post comments allows us to share information with people around the world. For this reason, online obituaries are a wonderful service and an important resource for grieving families.

Posted obituaries are intended to be public and open for comment. The openness of the information and the ease in sharing memories and sentiments are the value.

Unfortunately, dishonest people, such as identity thieves, also use this information to commit crimes. For this reason, we ask you to advise families on the amount of information to share about the decedent and relatives.

Unlike a local paper or a group gathered for services, hundreds of thousands of people have access to the internet every hour of the day. Identity thieves are very aware of the availability of information online as families reach out to one another. Identity thieves also know how quickly the

relevant to the chain of events that resulted in death, injury information should be included on the death certificate. Injury information must be completed anytime the manner is accidental.

To see use of the information in our annual report, go to <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/VitalStatistics/annualreports/Pages/annrep.aspx>. For more information about injury-related hospitalizations and deaths, see the Injury and Violence Prevention web site at <http://public.health.oregon.gov/PHD/ODPE/IPE/Pages/index.aspx>. ❖

online obituary can be posted compared to the completion and registration of the death record. This gives them an opportunity to obtain the birth record and create a false identity before the death is noted on the birth record and before credit agencies are notified.



Information required to obtain a certified copy of a birth record in Oregon includes full name, parents' names including mother's maiden name, child's date of birth, place of birth, and relationship to child (self, parent, sibling, etc.).

These are traditional obituary items, including the names of surviving siblings

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Online obituaries (Continued from page 4)

and children, putting other family members at risk for identity theft as well.

It is unfortunate that families must consider limiting information about a loved one and

OVERS Tip: Find the doc before you drop

If you use OVERS to create death certificates then you have probably dropped a death record to paper. Drop to paper is the process of printing the partially completed death record so that the doctor can complete the medical portion by hand. What you may not know is that some of the doctors you are sending paper records to might already have access to OVERS and be willing to complete the death certificate electronically.

You can easily find any doctor who has access to OVERS by using the “Request Medical Certification” tool (found on the death certification menu in OVERS). If the doctor’s name appears in the search tool on the Request Medical Certification page, then s/he can complete the medical section of the death record online.

To use the Request Medical Certification tool, you need to have a death record open in OVERS. At any point after you start the death certificate, click on the “Request

their surviving family members after a loss. However, it would be worse for the family to be the victim of a crime after a loss. Please encourage families to limit the facts in online obituaries in favor of narrative memories to protect the family from potential fraud. ❖

Medical Certification” link in the menu and search for the certifiers name by clicking on the magnifying glass icon and then entering the doctor’s last name into the search tool. If the doctor’s name doesn’t appear, and you are sure you’ve spelled the name correctly, then the doctor doesn’t have access to OVERS and you will need to send him/her a paper record.

If the doctor’s name does appear, then you can be sure that they have an account. To send the electronic request, you will also need to enter the doctor’s facility or office name. The quickest method for entering the facility name is to click on the magnifying glass icon and then enter a percent sign (%) in the search field. Only those offices with which the doctor is associated will appear.

If this is the first time you have referred to this doctor or office, we recommend that you call their office first. If the doctor signed up to use OVERS months or years ago but were never sent an electronic record, they may

have forgotten how to access or use OVERS. In those situations, the State OVERS team will happily work with the doctor to complete the record



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Tip: Find the doc (Continued from page 5)

electronically. You can call the OVERS help desk at 971-673-0279 for assistance.

Requesting medical certification in 4 easy steps:

1. **Find the doctor in the system.** Use the search (magnifying glass) icon and search by last name.
2. **Identify the facility.** Use the search icon and enter the wildcard (%) to bring back all facilities with which the doctor is associated. (This will generally be only

one or two facilities.)

3. **Click the “Save” button to send the request.**
4. **Contact the doctor’s office before sending the request.** (If this is the first time you have referred to this doctor or office and the doctor isn’t a frequent user, remind their office that the OVERS help desk will assist the doctor in completing and certifying the record.)❖

OVERS Tip: Using the type of ‘place of death’ dropdown list

When using OVERS to create a death record, it is important to select the accurate type of ‘place of death’ when entering the location that the death occurred. Once the type of ‘place of death’ is selected, the method for entering the facility name and address of the death location will be different depending on which type of ‘place of death’ you selected.

When you select some ‘place of death’ types, the facility name and address will automatically populate if you search for and select the facility name from the search tool while other ‘place of death’ types will require you to enter the address and facility name because a list of those places are not maintained in OVERS.

Decedent Residence & Decedent’s Residence – Hospice

In cases where the person died at home (Decedent Residence) or died at home under hospice care (Decedent’s Residence – Hospice) OVERS will automatically populate the place of death address based on the address you entered on the ‘Resident Address’ page. If you complete the ‘Place of

Death’ page before you complete the ‘Resident Address’ page, the place of death address will not automatically populate.

Hospital, Hospice facility, Nursing facility, Assisted living facility & Residential care facility

For cases where the decedent died in a hospital, hospice facility, nursing facility, assisted living facility or a residential care facility the system will auto-populate the facility name and address based on selection of the facility name from the facility name search tool. OVERS will populate the

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OVERS Tip: place of death (Continued from page 6)

facility names and addresses for these types of ‘place of death’ with information provided by the state and federal licensing

OVERS does not maintain the facility names or addresses for licensed adult foster homes.

boards of these facilities. If you do not see the licensed facility name or address you expect in the list of values please contact the OVERS help desk.

Licensed Adult Foster Home

OVERS does not maintain the facility names or addresses for licensed adult foster homes. Therefore, to enter the information for this type of ‘place of death’ you will need to type the name of the Adult Foster Home in the ‘Facility Name’ field and type the address in the address fields. Upon saving and validating this information you will receive a yellow edit message stating that the facility does not exist in the database. Please

Medical certifiers from bordering states

Under Oregon law, only licensed Oregon medical certifiers can sign the Oregon Certificate of Death. In an effort to follow law, the Center for Health Statistics is no longer registering death certificates signed by a medical certifier who does not have an active Oregon medical license.

If a medical certifier (physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner) from a bordering state has a patient who died in Oregon, a medical certifier with an active Oregon medical license must sign the certificate. Medical certifiers in bordering states may only sign Oregon death

override this message to continue processing the death record.

Other types of place of death

When the type of the ‘place of death’ does not fit into any of the available type categories you will want to select Other as the type of ‘place of death’. In the ‘other specify’ field you can add a description of the type of ‘place of death’ (for example: Public Park, Highway, Forest Trail, etc.). Then you will enter the address into the address fields.

A facility name should not be entered in the ‘other specify’ field. If you have trouble finding the facility you want within the list of values for the type of ‘place of death’ you’ve selected, please contact the OVERS helpdesk for support. Quite often the facility you are searching for is licensed under a different facility type or the name of the facility is different than the one you are entering. ❖



certificates if they have an active Oregon medical license.

The only exception to this practice is for medical certifiers signing on behalf of U.S. Veterans Health Administration or Indian Health Services offices. These physicians may sign the Oregon Certificate of Death regardless of the state in which

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their active license is held.

Funeral homes can try the following suggestions when working to complete a death certificate with an out of state medical certifier who does not have an Oregon medical license:

1. First, check to see if the out of state medical certifier has an Oregon medical license. If so, ask the medical certifier to use their Oregon medical license number on the record.
2. Second, ask the out of state medical certifier if another colleague in their practice might have an Oregon medical license and would be willing to review the decedent's file and sign the death certificate. If so, you would create a new record and deliver it to the Oregon licensed medical certifier for completion.
3. Third, if you cannot find an Oregon licensed medical certifier to sign the record, contact the State for advice on possible options.

If a county vital records office receives a death certificate signed by a medical certifier

E-mail notices provide important death reporting updates

If we don't have your current e-mail address, you may not be receiving all the information you need to complete death certificates quickly and accurately.

As a funeral director, you provide an important service to grieving families. Completing a death certificate quickly and accurately is an important part of that service. As your governmental partner in death reporting, we strive to provide timely

who does not have an Oregon medical license, they should not hold the record and they should not issue registered copies; they must send it immediately to the Center for Health Statistics. These records should never be issued, as legally they are

If a medical certifier from a bordering state has a patient who died in Oregon, a medical certifier with an active Oregon medical license must sign the certificate.

“unsigned”. Once the State office receives the record from the County, they will work with you, the funeral home, to try and identify an Oregon licensed medical certifier appropriate to sign the record.

We apologize for any inconvenience you may experience with this law, especially if you, as a funeral director, have in the past had Oregon death certificates signed by bordering state medical certifiers without an active Oregon license.

If you have any questions regarding this law, contact JoAnn Jackson, Registration Manager, Center for Health Statistics, at 971-673-1160. Thank you for your help with this matter. ❖

information on changes to laws and procedures.

E-mail broadcasting is now our primary tool for communicating with funeral directors because it is the quickest and most cost-effective way to inform you of updates and changes. In 2007, e-mail broadcasts were used primarily to notify OVERS users of system updates and changes to the OVERS

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website. We have since expanded our use of e-mail to notify partners of office closures and to distribute our biannual newsletter.

If you don't recall receiving an e-mail from us regarding vital records issues within the past six months, please contact our office with your e-mail address. If your e-mail address changes, please notify our office so that we can update our email notification list and continue to provide you with timely information.

If you are already receiving e-mails from us, and you encounter what appears to be a system issue in OVERS, please check your e-mail before calling the help desk. If we discover a defect in OVERS that impacts your ability to complete a death certificate or disposition permit, we will e-mail notification of the problem and provide you with a work around until the problem is corrected.

E-mail Kerry Lionadh at kerry.l.lionadh@state.or.us or call our OVERS help desk at 971-673-0279 to update your e-mail address. ❖

OVERS tip: Reporting time of death using the 24-hour clock

When using the 24-Hour clock, also referred to as Military Time, to report the Time of Death, use 00:00 to indicate Midnight. Do not use 24:00 to indicate Midnight because the National Center for Health Statistics does not accept this format. OVERS accepts 00:00 as the valid standard format for the beginning of the day and 23:59 as the end of the day when using the 24-Hour clock to report Time of Death. ❖



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 editor and writers who contributed to this newsletter:

Alicia Parkman, Karen Hampton, Carlos Herrera, Sandra Sams, Carol Sanders, Ember Talent, Karen Cooper, JoAnn Jackson, Sarah Apodaca, Melissa Franklin, Dani Hall, Lynda Jackson, Kerry Lionadh, Jennifer Woodward

We're just a phone call away

Our helpful team is happy to help when you have questions. The contact sheet that was delivered with this newsletter offers a complete listing of Center for Health Statistics employees who can assist you with any vital records question you may have. ❖

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

Frequent Contacts

Cause of Death
Melissa Franklin
971-673-1144

Death Corrections
Patty Thompson
971-673-1163

OVERS Helpdesk
971-673-0279

Field Liaison
Judy Shioishi
971-673-1166

CHS Managers

State Registrar
Jennifer Woodward
971-673-1185

Amendments/Certification
Carol Sanders
971-673-1178

Statistics Manager
Joyce Grant-Worley
971-673-1156

Registration Manager
JoAnn Jackson
971-673-1160

OVERS Manager
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Certification Supervisor
Karen Rangan
971-673-1182

The Center for Health Statistics' office is located at:

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971-673-1180

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

