

Texas Vital Statistics  
Department of State Health Services  
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Austin, Texas 78756

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Austin, Texas

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THE VITAL STATISTICS

# REVIEW

WINTER 2011

## 56th Annual Conference a Huge Success!

The 56th Annual Texas Vital Statistics Conference, "Plan, Prepare, Protect," was a great success. 433 local registrars, county and district clerks, justices of the peace, hospital and birthing center staff, midwives, funeral home directors and their staff, medical examiners and more attended 28 break-out sessions provided by 34 speakers. This year, the Vital Statistics Unit joined with the Community Preparedness Division of the Department of State Health Services to provide information on how both agencies can come together for a common goal: better health for Texans. The three-day conference addressed a variety of topics related to vital statistics registration and records for birth, death and marriage as well as related topics on vital records best practices and protection.

Attendees commented favorably on this year's content and curriculum. State Registrar Geraldine Harris and the Department of State Health Services Commissioner Dr. David Lakey respectively provided the welcome and conference opening, giving the

attendees an overview and update of the Department of State Health Services Vital Statistics program, while keynote speaker Dr. Jocelyn Sargent, Program Officer with the W.W. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan offered an overview of health care for culturally diverse populations. Dr. Sargent also spoke at the luncheon on the Kellogg Foundation's goals and programs. At the luncheon, Ms. Harris gave out Five Star Awards and numerous special awards, with the Office of the Attorney General and ImmTrac offering additional awards. Many of our attendees received awards for their excellence in performance.

The conference's 28 break-out sessions included topics on statutes, Texas Electronic Registrar (TER) registration, and panels for birth, death, marriage and local registrars and AOP certification. This year the Community Preparedness Division spoke on two topics, the state of Texas' plans in the event of mass fatality and a toolkit for local planning, and on the importance of

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# Explaining Cause and Manner of Death

## A Quick Guide for Medical Certifiers

The certifying physician should be reminded that the Cause and Manner of death is his or her best medical opinion.

**Part 1**

**Part 2**

Do not use terminal events or mode of dying such as: cardiac arrest, respiratory arrest, ventricular fibrillation, shock, or heart failure without showing the appropriate etiology.

Do not use mechanisms of death such as renal failure, respiratory failure, hepatic failure or multisystem organ failure without following it with an appropriate etiology.

Any cause of death that may be interpreted to have either a natural or traumatic etiology should be specified more clearly. A cause of death listed as "intracranial hemorrhage" could represent either a natural hypertensive intra cerebral hemorrhage or it could represent a subdural hematoma resulting from trauma. If it is trauma-related, you must report it to the ME/JP.

Any cause of death that includes drug or alcohol use must be verified to make sure it is a result of long term chronic use and the certifying physician shows the manner of death as Natural. Any short term, or acute use, such as an overdose may be considered an ME/JP case & should be reported to the ME/JP.

Any physician may sign the certificate as a Natural death.

Only a Medical Examiner or Justice of the Peace (ME/JP) may sign for anything other than Natural.

Part 2 is for all other significant conditions that did not directly cause the death. This would be for diseases or conditions that may have contributed to the death or health of the decedent but would not be listed as the immediate cause in Part 1.

Examples would include hyperlipidemia, diabetes and chronic substance abuse. Remember, traumatic injuries or drug history listed in Part 1 or Part 2 would be an ME/JP case.

## Cause of Death

Descriptions that may need to be reported to the ME/JP

- ABSCESS** - verify not trauma related
- ACCIDENT** - possible ME/JP case
- ACUTE RESPIRATORY DISTRESS SYNDROME** - verify etiology not trauma related
- ALCOHOL** - possible ME/JP case
- ALLERGIC REACTION** - possible accidental ME/JP case
- AMPUTATION** - possible trauma
- ANAPHYLAXIS** - possible accident
- ANY ORGAN FAILURE** - verify not trauma or OD
- ANY TYPE OF FRACTURE** - verify not trauma
- ANY TYPE OF SHOCK** - verify not trauma related
- ASPIRATION** - possible choking
- AVULSION** - usually trauma related
- BLUNT** - usually involves trauma
- BOWEL INFARCT** - verify not abdominal trauma
- BOWEL OBSTRUCTION** - verify not abdominal trauma
- BURNS** - verify trauma related
- CARDIAC DYSRHYTHMIA/ARRHYTHMIA** - verify not trauma related
- CARDIOPULMONARY ARREST** - must follow with etiology
- CEREBRAL HERNIATION** - verify not trauma related
- CHOKING** - possible ME case
- COMPARTMENT SYNDROME** - verify not trauma related
- "COMPLICATION OF..."** - verify not trauma related
- CONTUSION** - possible ME/JP case
- DECUBITUS ULCERS** - possible neglect & ME/JP case
- DEEP VENOUS THROMBOSIS (DVT)** - verify not trauma related
- DEHYDRATION** - possible ME/JP case
- DISSEMINATED INTRAVASCULAR COAGULATION (DIC)** - verify not trauma related
- DROWNING** - possible ME/JP case
- DRUGS/DRUG ABUSE** - possible ME/JP case
- ELECTROCUTION** - possible ME/JP case
- ENCEPHALOPATHY** - verify not trauma related
- EMPYEMA** - verify not trauma related
- FALL** - possible ME/JP case
- FAT EMBOLISM** - possible related to fractures
- GASTROINTESTINAL HEMORRHAGE** - verify not abdominal trauma
- GUNSHOT WOUND** - possible ME/JP case
- HEMATOMA** - possible ME/JP case
- HEMORRHAGE** - verify etiology not trauma related
- HEMOTHORAX** - possible chest trauma
- HYPOXIC ISCHEMIC ENCEPHALOPATHY** - possible ME/JP case
- INJURY** - possible ME/JP case
- INTOXICATION** - possible ME/JP case
- INTRACRANIAL HEMORRHAGE** - verify etiology not trauma related
- LACERATION** - possible ME/JP case
- MALNUTRITION** - possible neglect & ME/JP case
- METABOLIC ACIDOSIS** - possible OD & ME/JP case
- MULTISYSTEM ORGAN FAILURE** - verify etiology not trauma related
- NECROSIS** - verify etiology not trauma related
- NECROTIZING FASCIITIS** - verify etiology not trauma related
- OVERDOSE** - ME/JP case
- PARAPLEGIA/QUADRIPLEGIA** - verify if trauma
- PERITONITIS** - verify not abdominal trauma
- PNEUMONIA** - possible ME/JP case if due to exposure
- RESPIRATOR BRAIN** - verify etiology not trauma related
- RETROPERITONEAL HEMORRHAGE** - possible abdominal trauma
- RUPTURED/PERFORATED VISCUS** - possible trauma
- SEPSIS** - verify etiology not due to trauma
- SHOCK** - verify etiology not due to trauma
- STAB WOUND** - ME/JP case
- SUBARACHNOID** - usually Natural but could be trauma
- SUBDURAL** - usually trauma but could be Natural
- TOXICITY** - verify etiology not due to trauma
- UROSEPSIS** - verify etiology not due to trauma
- WOUND** - verify etiology not due to trauma

SOURCES: Tarrant County Deputy Chief John Briggs, Forensic Death Investigator; *Forensic Pathology: Principles and Practice* by Dolinak, Matshes, Lew; Satish Chundru, D.O., Travis County Deputy Chief Medical Examiner

# Welcome to Vital Statistics

The Texas Vital Statistics Unit would like to extend a special welcome to all the new county clerks and justices of the peace who will be taking office in 2011. We know how stressful it can be to come into a new job so we wanted to share some information on what you will need to provide to the Vital Statistics Unit.

**If you are a local registrar of births, deaths and fetal deaths, VSU will need:**

- an official statement from your offices that stipulates the date you officially take office and the duration of your term.
- a list of all deputy registrars that will be in your office – even if they are the same deputies as the last administration.
- A Texas Electronic Registrar (TER) Request Form for Local Registrars, signed by you as the local registrar, so that we can grant you access to the system.

**If you are a justice of the peace who will be conducting death inquests and will be the local registrar of births, deaths, and fetal deaths, you will need to:**

- complete a Texas Electronic Registrar (TER) Request form for Local Registrars, signed by you as the local registrar, so that we can grant you access to the system to register birth and death records in the TER system; and
- a Texas Electronic Registrar (TER) Request form for Justices of the Peace, signed by you, so that we can grant you access to the system to complete cause and manner of death on death certificates you will certify.

These Request forms are available at <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/vs/edeath/>.

**If your office is already using the Texas Electronic Registration system, you need to:**

- Complete the forms as described above, even if your location has a TER Local Administrator in place. It is important that we have a signed acknowledgment regarding the TER use and responsibilities for each local registrar and justice of the peace.

This is so we have a new user agreement on file from the new local registrar and/or justice of the peace.

**If you have any questions or need assistance with this process, please contact us at the TER Helpdesk at [Help-TER@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:Help-TER@dshs.state.tx.us)**

We get asked during administration changes whether or not you can continue to use the banknote security paper that has the previous office holder's name on it. You may still use the security paper stock you currently have, however, you should purchase new security paper with the new office holder's name on it as soon as your budget allows for it. Once you receive the new banknote security paper, you take account of the remaining old paper, void and then shred it. Always check with your legal office first to ensure this is permissible, then contact us to notify us of the document numbers affected. Also keep in mind that a customer cannot use the local issued record for the purposes of obtaining an Apostille from the Secretary of State if the security paper reflects the name of an inactive local registrar.

If there are any further questions regarding administration changeover, please contact your area field representative. Information about field representative can be found at [www.field.texasvsu.org](http://www.field.texasvsu.org).

## Numbering and the New Year



The Local Registrar shall consecutively number birth, death and fetal death certificates in separate series, beginning with the number "1" for the first birth, first death and the first fetal death in each calendar year. [HSC §191.026(b)]

Use a separate number series for numbering vital events (birth, death, fetal death), until completing the previous year's events. Assign the number "1" to the first certificate for each event occurring in the new calendar year. However, continue consecutively numbering the previous year's events with the events of that year.

For example, registrar 03 files a birth certificate on 12/31/09 and assigns the registrar's file number 03-398; on January 5, 2010 that registrar receives the first birth certificate for a baby born in 2010 and assigns that record the number 03-0001. The next day, a birth certificate arrives for another baby born on 12/31/09; the registrar must assign that certificate the registrar's file number 03-399. The example also applies to death and fetal death certificates.

The Local Registrar should be very careful when assigning file numbers to the records as the TER system will not be able to change numbers assigned in error.

## Local Registrar

# Reminders

### Ways to start the New Year right!

- Verify with your source providers that all 2010 event records have been filed.
- Remember to continue numbering your 2010 records with the 2010 number series.
- Be sure you started each of your first 2011 birth and death records with file number 1 (or 01, 001, 0001, etc) – your registrar number remains the same.
- Mail all 2010 certificates to the State Vital Statistics as soon as possible within 30 days of the event.

and don't forget to have a  
**Happy New Year!**

# Delayed Certificate of Birth Registration

If a birth occurring in this state is not officially registered within the first year, a Delayed Certificate of Birth may be requested through the Texas Vital Statistics office.

Here are the procedures for filing:

1. A formal search must first be conducted to determine that the birth record is not on file. Submit an application or written request for a certified copy of the birth certificate, along with the fee of \$22.00, to Vital Statistics in Austin. (For information on how to do this, please go to [www.dshs.state.tx.us/vs/reqproc/certified\\_copy.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/vs/reqproc/certified_copy.shtm))
2. If a birth record is found, Vital Statistics will send a certified copy of the record. If a record is not found, Vital Statistics will provide forms and instructions for filing a Delayed Certificate of Birth. Vital Statistics will retain the \$22.00 as a search fee.
3. The cost for filing a Delayed Certificate of Birth is \$25.00. There is a \$22 fee for a certified copy of the certificate.

For more information about Delayed Registration please visit:

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/vs/delayed/>

## Types of Documentation

- Hospital Record
- School Enrollment Record/  
Transcript
- US Census
- Baptismal Certificate Original \*
- Social Security Application (Do not  
send the Social Security Card) \*
- Application for Driver's License
- Application for State Issued ID
- Selective Service Record
- Military Discharge Record (DD214)
- Marriage or Divorce Records
- Affidavit of Birth Facts (sent with  
the Delayed Certificate packet)  
signed by a parent, grandparent, or  
older brother or sister \*
- Birth Certificate of Adult Children  
(18 years or older)

\* Types of documents that might show  
parent's names.

Announcing the

## 2011 Master Registrar Certification Course

The Department of State Health Services, Vital Statistics Unit would like to invite all local registrars to participate in our Master Registrar Certification course



## March 21-25, 2011

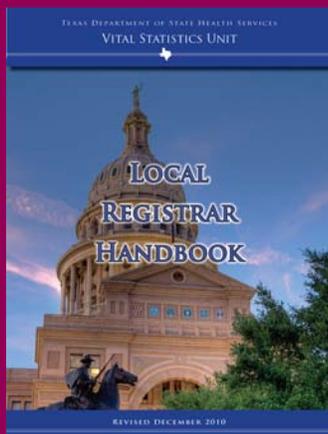
at the VSU Headquarters  
in Austin, Texas

Additional information and the  
registration form are available on  
the Vital Statistics website

[www.MRC.TexasVSU.org](http://www.MRC.TexasVSU.org)

But hurry, registration ends  
February 7, 2011!

## Announcing the Revised 2010 Local Registrar Handbook



*Now available online at:*

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/vs/handbooks/local/default.shtm>

# Frequently Asked Questions About Marriage



**QUESTION:** Who is responsible for filing a marriage license?

**ANSWER:** The person who conducts the ceremony should file the license.

**QUESTION:** Can first cousins get married in Texas?

**ANSWER:** No. First cousins are prohibited from marrying by Texas law. The law prohibits the following relatives from marrying: [FC 2.004(b),(6)]

- an ancestor or descendant by blood or adoption;
- a brother or sister, of the whole or half blood or by adoption;
- a parent's brother or sister, of the whole or half blood or by adoption; or
- a son or daughter of a brother or sister, of the whole or half blood or by adoption.

**QUESTION:** If two people get married, then later their parents get married, does that void the children's marriage since they will now be step-siblings?

**ANSWER:** Since the children are not related by whole or half blood or adoption, the children's marriage would not be void. [FC 2.004(b), (d)]

**QUESTION:** If two people get married out of the state or country, but then want to get married again in Texas, can they do so?

**ANSWER:** Yes, a clerk may not refuse to issue a license on the grounds that the applicants are already married to each other. If an applicant indicates on the application that he/she is presently married, the clerk should ask if the applicants are married to each other. If they are, the clerk records that statement on the license before administering the oath. [FC 2.009(b)]

**QUESTION:** If a man and woman were married in another state or country, is their marriage valid here in Texas?

**ANSWER:** Yes, the law of this state applies to persons married elsewhere who live in this state. [FC 1.103]

**QUESTION:** If a marriage takes place within 72 hours of the issuance of the marriage license and a waiver from the judge has not been obtained, should the county clerk file that marriage license?

**ANSWER:** The county clerk shall record the license. However, the law states that if the marriage ceremony takes place during the 72 hour period immediately following the issuance of the marriage li-

cense, the court can grant an annulment to a party to the marriage. A suit may not be brought under this Section more than thirty days after the date of the marriage. [FC 6.110 (a-b)] According to FC 1.101, every marriage is presumed valid unless expressly voided by Chapter 6. An action must also be brought forth to enact the void.

**QUESTION:** If a marriage is annulled, should the record be expunged from the files? What about the indexes?

**ANSWER:** The annulment is treated like a divorce. The record should not be expunged or indexes altered unless the marriage has been voided.

**QUESTION:** Would someone who is a church official or leader from another state or country be qualified to conduct a marriage ceremony in Texas?

**ANSWER:** Yes, as long as the church official or leader is a licensed or ordained Christian minister or priest, a Jewish Rabbi, or person authorized by a religious organization to conduct a marriage ceremony. [FC 2.202]

## 56th Annual Conference a Huge Success! *continued*

death reporting for public health response, specifically in the area of mortality surveillance. Ernie Buckley of Northern Bank Note brought a great deal of humor to protecting vital record documents against counterfeiting and fraud, while the Dallas and Houston passport offices offered their insights on protecting the integrity of birth records. The conference's most popular sessions included presentations on Delayed Records and Vital Statistics Fraud and the opening keynote address by Dr. Sargent. Attendees also enjoyed presentations addressing birth registrations in using the TER system, unusual birth scenarios, TER training for local registrars, and panel discussion groups for birth, death and local registrar issues, with a lively closing discussion with Ms. Harris.

We wish to thank Texas Public Health Association and the Community Preparedness Division of the Department of State Health Services in assisting us with the conference. We appreciate our speakers for their outstanding information and education for our attendees. And we also want to thank the many volunteers and helpers from VSU, without whose help this conference would not have been possible. We wish to provide special thanks to our platinum sponsor Vitalchek, silver sponsors Iron Mountain and Deloitte, as well as our many other exhibitors for their support.

# Security Paper

## Features and Requirements

All paper used for certified copies of vital records must meet specific security requirements. When you request a bid from a paper vendor, you must include the security features in accordance with TAC 181.28(c)(d) listed on this page in the specifications that you submit to the vendor. These security features must be incorporated in each certified copy or abstract issued from your office.

### Minimum Security Features

No certified copy or abstract shall be issued unless the issuing office provides security features in the paper used for issuance. Each sheet or document shall be made on paper which contains as a minimum the following features:

**Consecutive numbers** - documents that contain sequential numbers for control purposes

**Background security features** - a repetitious design consisting of a pattern that hinders counterfeiting efforts

**Copy void pantograph** - the word "void" appears when the document is photocopied

**Engraved border** - a border that is produced from engraved artwork containing images from fine lines to very complex patterns

**Microline printing or security thread** - a line of small alpha characters in capital letters that requires a magnifying glass to read

**Sensitized security paper** - paper that is reactive to chemicals commonly used to alter documents

**Prismatic printing** - a rainbow printing that is used as a deterrent to color copying

**Erasable fluorescent printing** - fluoresces under ultraviolet light and reacts to any attempt to erase in such a manner as to be immediately detectable

**Non-optical brighteners** - paper without added optical paper brighteners that will not fluoresce under ultraviolet light

**Complex colors** - colors that are developed by using a mixture of at least two primary colors (red, yellow and blue) and black is required

**Intaglio printing** - the printing process in which the paper is firmly pressed into the inked engraved plate. Once the paper is removed, the ink sticks to the top of the paper, creating a texture that can be felt with your fingers

**Latent image** - designs in the engraved border that contains hidden images that appear only when viewed from a prescribed angle to a light source. The intaglio process can print these images

**Watermark** - a three-dimensional graphic element molded into the paper in a continuous pattern during the paper manufacturing process [25 TAC § 181.28 (c)]

### Other Permitted Security Features

Other security features such as, but not limited to, the following, may also be incorporated in the paper used:

**Security laminate** - a plastic laminate is placed over printed information to reveal any attempts to alter the printed material; or

**Security thread** - micro printed polyester thread that is introduced into the paper during the forming process so that the thread is embedded and is an integral part of the paper. [25 TAC § 181.28 (d)]

The seal of office and the Local Registrar's signature on a certificate are also essential to a record's integrity/validity and should be included on the security paper. Security measures regarding blank security paper, seals, and signature stamps are also essential. Access to blank security paper should always be limited and any blank security paper should be locked up at the end of each work day.

Furthermore, request that the vendor include a sample of the paper with the bid they send to you. We recommend that Local Registrars work directly with VSU when they are purchasing paper and that they send us a sample to be sure that the paper meets these requirements before they accept the bid from a vendor.

# 2011 Five Star Award

Criteria for Qualification



## Timeliness

Average no more than 18 days for death registrations entered in Texas Electronic Registrar (TER), including manual, drop-to-paper and fully electronic, from the date of death to filing in the state office between January 1, 2011 to September 30, 2011.

Local registration offices averaging less than 12 days will be considered for an Exemplary Five-Star designation.

## Improvement

Have filed better than the state average of all death records fully electronically in your registration district from January 1, 2011 through September 30, 2011.

## Training

Attend the 2010 Annual Vital Statistics Conference or one of the 2011 Regional Vital Statistics Conferences.

## Timely Electronic Birth Registration

Register 95% of birth records in Record Acceptance Queue within one business day of receipt.

## Managing Registration

Complete the online self-assessment survey. The online self-assessment will be available via the website ([www.texasvsu.org](http://www.texasvsu.org)) this summer.

No application for the Five-Star Award is necessary.

Winners will be awarded at the 2011 Vital Statistics Annual Conference.

To view the list of 2010 Winners visit: [www.TexasVSU.org](http://www.TexasVSU.org)

