

May 2017 – Webinar for County and Deputy Registrars

Topic: Registration at the State and County – Q & A

Link to recording: <https://chsdhsoha.adobeconnect.com/pm2ekhsghm5g/> (25 minutes)

1. **Question:** What do we do when we are issuing replacement records for certificates that had incorrect information on them and we cannot retrieve and shred all death certificates that were previously issued?

Answer: Please make every effort to retrieve all previously issued certificates that had incorrect information on them. If you cannot get all copies back, please let our office know. The service cannot be considered a replacement unless the previously issued certified copy is returned.

2. **Question:** If a funeral home submits an order for death certificates but doesn't request veteran's copies, how does that affect the family?

Answer: It should not be a problem for the family. The family can order veterans' copies to be sent to any VSO or use a paid copy of the death certificate for veteran's benefits. However, our law provides up to two free certified copies of vital records for veterans' benefits and we want funeral homes and families to use this benefit. We encourage funeral homes to utilize this service (and never fax certified copies) in order to better serve Oregon veterans and their families. County offices may provide funeral homes with their county's version of the order form (if they have one). The State Vital Records office also has provided a fillable PDF and editable Word version of our order form, which counties can feel free to edit with their own logos or contact information as they choose. The form is available here:

<http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/Pages/InstructionsDeath.aspx>

As a reminder, counties should accept this version of the form if received from funeral homes.

3. **Question:** When counties mail the certified veteran's copies of the death certificate to veteran's service offices, do we also have to include the VA burial benefit application, too?

Answer: We strongly encourage counties to forward the VA burial benefit application along with the death certificate to the veteran's service office if it was provided to you. However, you may send a death certificate without the application if it is not available.

4. **Question:** Regarding the two free veteran's copies that families have available to them, do counties send both copies to the same place?

Answer: There is nothing in law that prohibits both copies being sent to one office. The USDVA probably has no need for two copies but a local or national VSO might want both copies to process separate benefits. Please follow the family's choices. If only one copy is used, the family (or local VSO) can order the second free copy at a later date.

*Effective January 1, 2018, the State Medical Examiner Office will become the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

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5. **Question:** How will counties be able to receive Medical Examiner death reports in a timely manner due to the shortage of employees now?

Answer: Our office is working closely with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner* and will continue to support them in striving to meet the timelines required of them to better serve Oregon families. Please remember that while local vital records' offices often support their county Medical Examiner, at the state level the Medical Examiner is part of the Oregon State Police.

6. **Question:** What does the county registrar's expectation to train deputy registrars entail?

Answer: County registrars may designate one or more deputy county registrars at their county. All county registrars and deputy registrars must comply with the instructions from the State Registrar, Jennifer Woodward, which includes following applicable [rules](#) and [laws](#) relating to the collecting, registering, amending, storing, selling, and analyzing of Oregon vital records. Two very important aspects of both county and deputy registrars is the responsibility to understand how to determine if a record is legally sufficient in order to register the record, as well as who you can issue a certified copy to. County registrars may provide their own training to new deputy registrars, and we also encourage you to utilize the vital records overview training that the state office provides. The training is done via a live webinar classroom and is conducted as a 3-part series (1 hour per session) which covers vital records laws and policies, an OVERS demonstration for how to issue a birth and death certificate, and how to issue replacement copies. If you are interested in scheduling one of these trainings for a new employee please contact Krystalyn Salyer at 971-673-1197 or krystalyn.salyer@state.or.us.

7. **Question:** Our office received a paper death certificate along with an affidavit to correct line #20 (Spouse's Name Prior to First Marriage) from the funeral home. The funeral home told us that the state office gave direction that as long as we have both the affidavit and the original paper death certificate in our hands and it is not yet registered, then you can make a correction to that field. Is this correct?

Answer: We confirmed with Derrick Patterson, our death corrections specialist, that the information provided is correct.

If a funeral home obtains new information prior to registering a paper or hybrid death record, it is acceptable to submit a correction affidavit signed by the funeral director along with the original death record prior to registration. The affidavit must accompany the paper/hybrid death record when it is delivered to the county vital records office for registration. Once the record is registered, the county office should refer all changes to these items to the state office for review, to ensure the rules are being followed.

In summary, if the affidavit comes in with the record to be registered, the changes are permissible. However, if the funeral home brings you a record and later notices the error, even if the certificate is still in your possession [OAR 333-011-0300](#) applies and the funeral home would need to go through the state office to make the change. If you have questions about what changes can be made at your county please contact Derrick Patterson at 971-673-1163 or derrick.patterson@state.or.us.

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8. **Question:** Death certificates in our county stay at doctor's offices longer than 5 days, how does this apply to the turnaround time specified in law?

Answer: There is no additional time under law for delays at the medical certifier's office. Oregon Revised Statute [432.133](#) (Mandatory submission and registration of reports of death; persons required to report) requires that medical certifiers certify death reports within 48 hours of receiving the report and that funeral directors submit death reports to the county or state office within 5 days of the death event. Our office understands that these timelines are not always met but we are all working together to see how we can improve. For example, the office of the Chief Medical Examiner* has agreed to register pending causes of death, which should help register those death reports much more quickly.

9. **Question:** Our Medical Examiner office holds onto death records much longer than the required timeline; what should we do?

Answer: We know that Medical Examiners frequently wait for toxicology lab reports, which can take 8 weeks or longer in certain circumstances before completing the death certificate. Sometimes the Medical Examiners do not understand that the family cannot access benefits, bank accounts, life insurance, etc., without a registered death certificate. Recently our office worked with the Chief Medical Examiner**, Dr. Karen Gunson to promote certifying death reports with a pending cause of death to allow the record to be registered. We have seen a tremendous improvement in timely registration of these records with a pending cause.

10. **Question:** Are funeral homes allowed to send death reports to doctors by mail? This can take up to 3-4 weeks for a death report to be registered.

Answer: While it seems very unlikely that a funeral home can submit a death report within five days if using mail to send it to the medical certifier, there is nothing in law that prohibits use of mail. Funeral homes are not required to report deaths electronically, and some medical certifiers request to sign death reports on paper which does lengthen the time for a death record to be registered. The good news is that the majority of funeral homes and about 44% of medical certifiers are electronic. We are consistently working with clinics and facilities in bringing on more medical providers to electronically sign death records.

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