

Matters of Record



Death certificate news April 2017

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Working together to meet the needs of veterans and their families

Over the past few months, the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs (ODVA), the Oregon Funeral Directors Association (OFDA) and the Center for Health Statistics (CHS) have been working together to find ways to better serve veterans’ families.



We all share the common goal of recognizing the service and sacrifice of Oregon’s veterans by helping their families obtain services and benefits earned.

Recent activities for CHS include revising the [order form](#) for free veterans’ use copies to make them more user-friendly and easier to locate addresses of Veterans’ Services Offices (VSO) in Oregon and nationwide. We rearranged the form to highlight county VSOs where local partners can provide in-person assistance. Working with someone who is known and trusted is often the most successful for the veteran and his or her family. We want to support access by providing certified copies of death records (and birth if required) to process benefits in Oregon or across the nation, as the family chooses. We will continue to refine the order form and the order process to serve Oregon families while complying with our law.

We thank veterans for their service, recognizing that it occurs during peace and conflict, throughout the U.S. and all over the world. Thank you also to all funeral directors, VSOs and ODVA for their actions throughout the year in supporting Oregon veterans.

H. A. Woodward
State Registrar

Amendments to marital status and spouse's name

Funeral directors should be careful when entering marital status and spouse's name on a death record. If the decedent was married or widowed at the time of death, the spouse's full name prior to first marriage—also known as the maiden or name at birth—should be listed under “Spouse's Name”. We request name prior to first marriage rather than the married last name to have an additional name to help us identify the record and the identity of the spouse.

Common mistakes we see include listing a wife's legal surname instead of her name prior to first marriage, listing a nickname for the spouse, or listing the name of a spouse from a previous marriage. There are specific rules related to amending marital status and spouse's name. Making an amendment may require the informant to sign an affidavit and provide an evidence document or a court judgment. Changes can be time-consuming and costly for the informant or the spouse if a court judgment is required to make the correction.

“If marital status is married/partnered and the wrong spouse's name is added, current rules require a court judgment to make the change.”

If the informant is not certain of the correct marital status or the name of the spouse, it is best to list one or both items as “Unknown” so that the correct information can be added with an affidavit signed by the informant and an evidence document. If marital status is married/partnered and the wrong spouse's name is added, current rules require a court judgment to make the change.

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 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.

You can review all the rules related to changes to marital status and spouse's name under OAR 333-011-0300 (2). These rules are available on the web at: http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/pages/rules/oars_300/oar_333/333_011.html.

If you have questions about these corrections, you can contact Derrick Patterson at 971-673-1163 or by email: derrick.c.patterson@state.or.us.

Funeral home adoption of electronic death records

Funeral directors continue to excel at electronic records with only 2.7% of death records fully paper. While the majority of paper records are scattered among dozens of funeral homes, several funeral homes have significant numbers of paper records. These include Alpha Cremation Services (19.8% of all paper records registered in 2016), Holman's Funeral & Cremation Services (15.8%) and Musgrove Family Mortuary (14.2%). During 2016, deaths reported on paper forms had an average of three weeks between death and registered status at the state, compared to just over one week (7.5 days) for electronic records.

Electronic death records update

Use of OVERS is spreading throughout the medical community. In 2015, 21.1% of certifiers used OVERS (1,064 of 5,049) while in 2016, 24.3% used OVERS (1,164 of 4,790). This slow but steady growth appears in every facility type.

Facility type	Jan-Jun 2016	Jul-Dec 2016
Hospitals	53.5%	56.5%
Licensed Assisted Living or Residential Care Facilities	22.7%	27.5%
Nursing Facilities	21.3%	24.8%
Hospice (Residence or Facility)	27.9%	29.2%
Other	42.6%	44.6%

Thirty-nine percent of records for 2016 deaths were fully electronic, compared to 33.5% in 2015 and 28.2% in 2014.

Almost every hospital in Oregon is required to have medical certifiers use OVERS for deaths that occur in their facility ([ORS 432.133](#)). All hospitals received letters in October reminding them of the law. The letters were sent to the hospital administrators and reported the facility's current usage as well as comparisons to other hospitals (either in their parent organization or similar in size and geographic area). One of the strongest performances in 2016 was the Veterans' Administration Hospital in Roseburg. Roseburg VA did not start using OVERS until late 2015, yet achieved usage of 96.6% in 2016. Our thanks to Roseburg VA and the local funeral homes who encouraged and supported their use of OVERS.

Medical certifiers' use of OVERS continues to vary greatly by county, with several of our rural counties reaping the benefit of the electronic system with fast service to families without the delay and miles to deliver paper. Harney County was 100% electronic for the fourth year in a row, Grant County had 95.2% electronic and Lake County had 83.0% electronic. Three counties (Union, Wallowa and Gilliam) had less than 10% electronic records during 2016, although only one fully paper record for the year.

In addition to the letters sent to facility administrators, CHS implemented functionality that now allows funeral directors to enter time of death in electronic records and update the date of death before there is a medical owner. Once referred to the medical certifier, only the medical certifier or state office can change those items. If a record is referred to a medical certifier without time of death, please contact the OVERS help desk for assistance.

We will continue to promote use of OVERS by medical certifiers. Our plans include more frequent reporting to hospital administrators, including comparisons to other facilities and education on the timelines required by statute (48 hours for medical certifier to complete, five days total to register). We are also continuing to pursue functionality in the system that would capture a physical signature and not require use of the biometrics.

If you have any questions about who is participating or have suggestions for contacts in your local medical community, please contact the OVERS help desk at 971-673-0279. Thank you for your support of OVERS.

Updated Oregon Death Certificate Worksheet for funeral homes

As you know, it is very important that funeral homes collect complete and accurate information about a decedent for his or her legal record of death. To help with this, the Center for Health Statistics has developed a useful tool for gathering information from a family member or an informant. Death Certificate Worksheets collect the same information as the record of death, but can be completed by the informant and signed off by the funeral director.



Your facility may have similar worksheets that you use to collect decedent information from the informant. Our office has recently updated the Death Certificate Worksheet for consistency with the information that is collected. Our worksheets follow the order of the official record of death, which can then be easily transferred onto the legal paper or electronic record.

We are encouraging funeral homes to use these worksheets when collecting decedent information from family members or informants. Completed worksheets can be easily reviewed and proofread by family members and informants. Clerical errors from data entry can then be clearly identified and fixed.

An example of where these worksheets can help is using specific language that is clear on what information is needed. Previous language such as “Spouse’s name” is vague and unclear, whereas requesting “Spouses name prior to first marriage” will help result in the maiden name being provided instead of the married name.

The worksheet can be found on our website at: <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/Pages/InstructionsDeath.aspx>

A modifiable version is available which can be tailored to fit your specific needs.

If you have any questions about death corrections, contact Derrick Patterson at 971-673-1163 or derrick.c.patterson@state.or.us. For any questions relating to data entry on the death record, contact Cynthia Roeser at 971-673-0478 or cynthia.r.roeser@state.or.us. For questions about navigating OVERS, contact Krystalyn Salyer at 971-673-1197 or krystalyn.salyer@state.or.us.

Affidavit faxing for medical certifiers

The Center for Health Statistics (CHS) is pleased to offer medical certifiers an additional option for returning completed medical affidavits. Certifiers may return these affidavits by faxing them to our office. The fax number is 971-673-1201.

CHS will continue to include a postage-paid return envelope with each affidavit for certifiers who prefer to mail the affidavit back. Now that the option to fax the completed affidavit back to CHS is available, certifiers may find it to be a more convenient option. If you have any questions, please contact JoAnn Jackson at joann.jackson@state.or.us or by telephone at 971-673-1160.

Connected amendments on death certificates

A recurring issue with death certificate amendments are corrections to one item that affect another item on the death certificate. When reviewing the certificate, connections can be overlooked, which can result in excess certificate exchanges and longer footnotes. To avoid these errors, please take an additional look at the remainder of the certificate to make sure another portion won't be affected by the amendment you are requesting. Be aware that some items may show up in multiple places on a certificate.

A few examples of amendments that are connected:

- Changes to the Place of Residence and Location of Death—these could be the same location and any changes should be done to both places where the information occurs
- Amending Veteran Status from No to Yes—this would require a Supplemental Combat Report to be submitted
- Corrections to a shared Last Name—the Decedent, Informant, Spouse, and Father often have the same last name and each should be updated if needed

Our goal is to create awareness and cut down on errors so we can better assist you and the families you serve. If you have any questions on this subject or would like more examples on how amendments may be connected, please contact Derrick Patterson at (971)673-1163 or by email: derrick.c.patterson@state.or.us.

TYPE OR PRINT IN PERMANENT BLACK INK.		Oregon Health Authority		CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS REPORT OF DEATH		Examples of connected amendments: - Last name of Decedent, Spouse, & Informant _____ - Address of Decedent, Informant, & Place of Death _____	
I.D. TAG NO.		1. Legal name: (Include AKAs, if any)		2. Death date (MON DD YYYY):		STATE FILE NUMBER	
First: Jane		Middle: Emily		Last: Smith		Suffix:	
3. Sex (M/F): F		4a. Age - Last birthday: 42		4b. Under 1 year: Months: Days:		4c. Under 1 day: Hours: Minutes:	
7. Birthdate (MON DD YYYY):		8a. Birthplace (city/town or county):		8b. (State or foreign country):		9. Decedent's education:	
10. Was decedent of hispanic origin? (Yes or no. If yes, specify)		11. Decedent's race(s):		12. Was decedent ever in U.S. Armed Forces? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
13. Residence: Number and street (e.g.: 624 SE 5th Street, Apt. no. 8): 123 SE Main Street		14. City/town: Portland		15. Residence county: Multnomah		16. State or foreign country: Oregon	
17. ZIP code + 4: 97200		18. Inside city limits? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		19. Marital status at time of death: Married		20. Spouse's name (if married or widowed, full name given at birth): John Michael Smith	
21. Usual occupation (Indicate type of work done during most of working life. DO NOT USE "RETIRED".):		22. Kind of business/industry (DO NOT USE COMPANY NAME.):		23. Father/Parent B's full name given at birth:		24. Mother/Parent A's full name given at birth:	
25. Informant's name: John Michael Smith		26. Telephone number:		27. Relation to decedent: Spouse		28. Mailing Address (number & street, city/town, state, Zip + 4): 123 SE Main Street, Portland Oregon 97200	
29. Place of death: Decedent's Residence		30. Facility name:		31. Location of death (Give address.): 123 SE Main Street		32. City/town or location of death: Portland	
33. State: OR		34. ZIP code + 4: 97200		35. Method of disposition:		36. Place of disposition (Name of cemetery, crematory or other place):	
37. Location:							

A new death certificate brochure is here

An updated death certificate brochure, “The Oregon Death Certificate,” is now available. This is a great resource for you to distribute to families.

The order form for the brochure is located here:

http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/Documents/45_43B.pdf



Cynthia Roeser is retiring



The Center for Health Statistics is announcing the retirement of Cynthia Roeser, vital records’ Data Entry Supervisor. You may know her as the primary contact for midwives, birth information

specialists and their managers. Although we are sad to see her go, we are very grateful for all she has done for vital records and wish her the best of luck!

1. How many years have you worked for the state of Oregon? How did you get started?

By the time I retire, I will have worked for the state of Oregon for 10-1/2 years. I went to have my haircut one Saturday and as I was waiting for my hairdresser to finish with the gentleman in the chair, my hairdresser mentioned to me that this customer worked for the state. The customer and I started talking and he mentioned there was an opening for a supervisor for the certification unit for the Center for Health Statistics (CHS).

2. Do you have a funny story or anecdote about your time with vital records to share?

JoAnn Jackson, the State Registration Manager, and I were driving down a rural highway coming back from a triennial review and an owl almost hit the car!

3. What has been the most memorable change you’ve seen in CHS over the years?

The two biggest changes I’ve seen are when we started using the OVERS system, along with this past year when we got scanners and started scanning our marriage and divorce records into OVERS.

4. What part of your job have you liked the most?

I really enjoy the customer service. It feels good to help a family member get a death record or a birth record, or just helping anyone who has an urgent need for a record. I will track down the record for them and make sure it gets processed so they can get copies for things such as insurance purposes or needing a birth record for their baby to travel overseas.

5. What does retirement look like for you? Any hobbies you’re wanting to pick up? Any big travel or family plans?

Busy! I love to exercise and I plan to do more of that, plus taking up paddling again. I also am going to plant a vegetable and flower garden. We have some little trips planned for the rest of this year, and in the next two years we have trips to Europe planned!

After 39 years with the state of Oregon, Carol Sanders is retiring

What does 39 years with the state of Oregon and 28 years with vital records look like? You won't run across many people who can answer that question, but at the Center for Health Statistics we have someone who can. Carol Sanders, the Certification and Amendments Manager at the state vital records office is retiring. Although we are saddened to see her go, the contributions she's made over the years and her influence in the world of vital records will carry on. We wish her all the best in her much-deserved retirement!



1. What was your first job at the state, and what other positions have you held during your 39-year career?

I moved to Oregon from Connecticut in 1977 and took what I expected would be a temporary job as an office specialist 2 in what was then called Environmental Health. A year later, I was lucky to be in the right place to get a promotion to an executive support specialist position for the Administrator of Environmental Health. In 1987, I began working as the executive support specialist for the Public Health Division director and worked there until 1989, when I became the certification unit manager in the Center for Health Statistics.

2. What is your favorite accomplishment during your career?

That's a hard question – I think one of the most rewarding is the number of staff that I helped hire, train, and saw move on to higher and more responsible positions or who stayed and became mainstays of the teams I have worked with. The second thing that comes to mind is working on the development and implementation of the web-based software used in vital records that replaced the Mainframe system. It took a long time, but it has been worth it and the software continues to be improved and utilized in new and different ways.

3. Looking back over the years, how has vital records evolved for you? Can you recall what the price of a vital record was when you first started, how many staff you've managed over the years, and an estimate of how many records you have amended?

I believe when I started in vital records in 1989 the basic record fee had just changed from \$11 to \$13. I don't have an old organizational chart, but my memory is that we had 10 full-time and one half-time staff in the certification unit. We reorganized some of the units in the office in 2000, and I was assigned to be the manager of the amendments unit and the staff working on records preservation. We also added some positions as workloads grew. The current total is 25 staff working in these areas. It is difficult to estimate the total number of staff I have managed over all these years. My best guess is 50-75 permanent staff and between 150-200 staff if you include the temporary staff. The amendment team currently amends 35,000-39,000 records per year. If I estimate that the average for all 16 years is 30,000 per year, then the amendment team has completed at least 390,000 amendments in this time period.

(Continued on page 8)

4. What do you envision vital records will look like in another 39 years?

Well I hope there is a good replacement for microfilm – something that can retain an image of a record for a couple hundred years without fading or reducing the image quality! I was working in Public Health when the first computers were ordered for agency staff. I expect vital records staff will be able to view images of records on computer screens and reduce, enlarge and edit using touch screens like we now use on smart phones. I also expect all old records will eventually be imaged and available electronically, perhaps in a new computer format, rather than from paper or microfilm.

5. What will your average day look like now?

Well I hope to learn to sleep in later than 5:45 a.m. and to get in many more walks and trips to the gym, the library, Powell's, and eventually do more travel. I may dabble in art or take a photography or language class if I find myself getting bored.

6. Shakespeare wrote 37 plays. How many of those have you seen performed live and which was your favorite?

I have seen all of them, some of them probably more than 10 times. My favorite comedy is “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” because of the complexity of the plot – characters in a fairy world interacting with characters from the court and the village rustics, who have some of the funniest scenes in Shakespeare. From the tragedies, I still like seeing another production of “Hamlet.” There are so many ways to play Hamlet that he can seem like a different character depending on the director’s interpretation of the play.

7. Do you have any words of wisdom for us?

I would like to steal a list from a mystery writer, Louise Penny, who had a character say that it was possible to have a good life by using the following phrases as often as necessary: “‘I’m sorry’; ‘I was wrong’; ‘Please forgive me’; and ‘I need help.’” There may be one more, but it escapes me at the moment, so maybe it should be “‘What have I missed?’”

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:

Derrick Patterson, Krystalyn Salyer, Karen Hampton, Jennifer Woodward, Carolyn Hogg, Carol Sanders, Johanna Collins, Cody Wang, Lenae Chipman, Laura Munoz, Juana Anguiano Rivera, Cynthia Roeser, JoAnn Jackson, Melissa Franklin, Jamie Gould, Melissa Alarcon-Evans, Steven Baird, Diane Fox, and Vanessa Grayson.

Frequent contacts

Cause of Death

Melissa Franklin
971-673-1144

Death Corrections

Derrick Patterson
971-673-1163

OVERS Help Desk

971-673-0279

CHS managers

State Registrar

Jennifer Woodward
971-673-1185

**Vital Statistics and
Systems Manager**

Karen Hampton
971-673-1191

Registration Manager

JoAnn Jackson
971-673-1160

Certification Supervisor

Karen Rangan
971-673-1182

**Amendments/Certification
Manager**

Carol Sanders
971-673-1178

Data Processing Supervisor

Cynthia Roeser
971-673-0478

The Center for Health Statistics is located at:

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

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

General information: 971-673-1190

Order vital records: 1-888-896-4988

Website:

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

OVERS website:

<http://healthoregon.org/overs>

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