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TEXAS VITAL STATISTICS NEWS

Texas Vital Statistics, Texas Department of State Health Services

Spring, 2005 Vol. 8, No. 2

Texas Vital Statistics & Office of the Attorney General Partner in Training

Once again, Texas Vital Statistics and the Paternity Opportunity Program of the Office of the Attorney General will be providing joint training throughout Texas for hospital and birthing center staff, midwives and local registrars. The training will center on Acknowledgment of Paternity Certification, which is required annually, and on the most effective use of the TER-Birth system.

The half-day training will be offered in 22 different locations around the state. Morning sessions are from 8:00 a.m. - noon, and afternoon sessions are from 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

These training sessions are free, but registration is requested. To register for one of the following classes, contact Maria Ochoa at 512/460-6513 or via e-mail at maria.ochoa@cs.oag.state.tx.us.

VS-OAG Training Calendar

- June 15 Longview**, a.m. & p.m. Good Shepherd Medical Center
- June 16 Austin**, a.m. & p.m. Texas Dept. of State Health Services
- June 20 San Antonio**, a.m. & p.m., TNI Building
- June 23 Beaumont**, a.m. & p.m. Christus St. Elizabeth Hospital
- June 29 Lubbock**, a.m. & p.m. City of Lubbock Health Department
- June 30 Amarillo**, a.m. & p.m. Northwest Texas Healthcare System
- July 12 Dallas**, a.m. & p.m. Medical City Dallas, Black Bldg.
- July 14 Corpus Christi**, a.m. & p.m., Christus Spohn Memorial
- July 15 Denton**, a.m. & p.m. Denton Regional Medical Center

- July 19 Bryan**, a.m. & p.m. St. Joseph Regional Health Center
- July 21 Fort Worth**, a.m. & p.m. Harris Methodist Hospital
- July 26 Victoria**, a.m. & p.m. DeTar Hospital Navarro
- July 27 Laredo**, p.m. only Doctors Hospital of Laredo
- July 28 Houston**, a.m. & p.m. Memorial Hermann SW Hospital
- July 29 Houston**, a.m. only Memorial Hermann SW Hospital
- August 2 San Angelo**, a.m. & p.m., Shannon Hospital
- August 3 Abilene**, a.m. only County Courthouse
- August 16 Wichita Falls**, a.m. Wichita Co. Public Health District
- August 23 Harlingen**, a.m. & p.m., Valley Baptist Medical Center
- August 25 McAllen**, p.m. only Heart Hospital
- September 1 Midland**, a.m. & p.m., Midland Memorial Hospital
- September 7 El Paso**, a.m. & p.m. El Paso County Courthouse
- September 13 Waco**, a.m. only Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center

Welcome to New Staff

The Field Services Team is pleased to introduce new staff to support your needs in the field.

Brenda Briseno is our administrative assistant. She's an experienced VS employee, and is working on a statewide database and on preparation of materials for trainings since March.

Victor Farinelli is the new Area Representative for North Texas as of May 1st. He's experienced in Vital Statistics and as a trainer, and a very welcome asset to Field Services.

Preparation for Online Death Registration

The future of death registration in Texas is the online death registration system to be implemented on Jan. 1, 2006. VS is working closely with the vendor to develop the Texas Electronic Registrar (TER)-Death application. System testing will begin in July, and several communities will be pilot-testing TER-Death in October.

Planned features of the new system include automatic verification of SSNs by the Social Security Administration within minutes of starting a death record; certification via electronic signature; automated Burial Transit Permit issuance; and ordering certified copies online.

At this stage, focus is on informing users about the coming changes. TER-Death presentations are being made across Texas. Previews of the new system will be made at the TxHIMA Conference (6/7); the County & District Clerks Association Conference (6/22); the Justice Court Association meeting (7/13); the Vital Statistics Regional Conferences (see pg. 3) in August; and many funeral director meetings.

Plan to attend multiple sessions, as information is constantly updated, and sign up by contacting SilviaL.Hernandez@dshs.state.tx.us.

In this issue . . .

VS & OAG Partner in Training	p. 1
Welcome to New Staff	p. 1
Online Death Registration	p. 1
TER-Birth Update & Tips	p. 2
Regional Conference Details	p. 2
Regional Conference Registration Form	p. 3
Delayed Birth Registration	p. 4
Master Registrars	p. 4

TER-Birth Update & Tips

As the six-month anniversary of TER-birth implementation approaches, we want to reflect on the challenges and triumphs we have experienced together in totally changing the way Texas registers and issues birth certificates.

Thanks to you, it's working!

Thanks to your cooperation, there are now 301 hospitals, birthing centers and midwives and 113 local registrar offices all utilizing TER-Birth. As of April 1, 102,578 births have been registered using the system. This has been a long, difficult implementation for all involved. There were bugs in the software, new procedures to learn, new data items to collect and just a whole different way of doing things.

Texas Vital Statistics wishes to express sincere appreciation to all who have worked through this new system with us. With your diligence and dedication to the important process of birth registration, we have come a long way! Also we appreciate your valuable feedback and suggestions, some of which we have been able to implement and others we have on our "wish list."

New & Improved Processes!

We want to update you on some activities we have been working on to improve user accessibility.

First, software and hardware have been ordered to increase the incoming fax lines from two to four. You will still only dial the one toll-free number (1-866-566-3138), but, by late May, there will be four lines available to receive your faxed AOP and ImmTrac forms. At our request, many of you have been faxing your AOP and ImmTrac forms separately. This is no longer necessary. Beginning immediately, you may fax them together and as frequently as you wish.

Secondly, Texas Vital Statistics has reallocated staff and hired additional temporary staff to work a second

shift to clear the AOP backlog. As we began using the system, we learned that if the software was unable to read a faxed form, it would be sent to a queue to wait for a person to manually process that unreadable form and all others faxed in at the same time. This resulted in a severe backlog. Until VS could allocate more staff to the reviewing process, there were many complaints from parents needing certified copies of their child's record and their child's Social Security Card. This impacted everyone: hospitals, local registrars and the State Office. We expect to be completely current by the end of May, and to remain so.

In a related activity, as of April 27, requests for SSNs for newborns are sent to the Social Security Administration within one day of the legal release of the record. Previously, those requests were not forwarded to SSA until the birth certificates had been assigned a state file number. By clearing the AOP backlog and expediting the SSN requests, we expect to significantly reduce the number of customer inquiries in Austin and at your sites.

Tips for More Efficient Use:

We have several tips that can make the fax process even more efficient.

- (1) Please fax **only** AOP and ImmTrac Consent forms to the fax server. Do not send fax cover sheets unless your hospital requires you to do so.
- (2) Do not fax the AOP back, AOP Parent Surveys, Verification of Birth Facts forms, Mother or Medical Worksheets or Social Security letters to our office.
- (3) Do not fax applications for amendments, notes to VS staff or Data Correction Sheets to the fax server.

There are several things that birth registrars can do to help with timely registration of births.

- (1) Avoid manual completion of AOPs. Nearly 66% of TER-gener-

ated AOPs move through the system without delay, while all manual AOPs require review and are delayed.

- (2) Send faxes with the top part of the form entered first. The software cannot read an upside-down form.
- (3) Legally release your birth records as quickly as possible.
- (4) Check your Unresolved Records Queue regularly to identify any records that may have been rejected and returned to your work queue.

Regional Conferences: The Details

Texas Vital Statistics and our co-sponsor, the Texas Public Health Association, will host four regional one-day conferences in August in four Texas cities: Fort Worth, Odessa, McAllen and Galveston.

At each conference event, there will be full-day tracts on Birth Registration, Death Registration and Local Registration. AOP Certification training will be provided. Of special interest will be information about the new Texas Electronic Registrar (TER)-Death system.

Continuing Education hours have been applied for with the Texas Department of State Health Services Midwifery Program, AHIMA, The Texas Justice Court Training Center, The County and District Clerks' Association of Texas and the Texas Funeral Services Commission.

To register for a Regional Conference, copy and complete the form on pg. 3, and mail as directed. The cost of the conference is \$60 in advance, \$70 at the door. Registration by mail must be received by July 29th.

For more information on hotel rates and reservations for these conferences, see www.texaspha.org.

Correction: Claybar Funeral Home & Christus St. Michael Health System were inadvertently omitted from 5-Star Winner lists in the last newsletter issue. Apologies & congratulations to these winners!

HOT TOPICS

Vital Statistics Regional Conferences

Summer 2005

Fort Worth
Green Oaks Hotel
August 4

Odessa
MCM Elegante
August 8

McAllen
Four Point Sheraton
August 10

Galveston
The Tremont
August 12

Regional Conference Registration Form

please print or type:

Name: _____ Title: _____

Office: _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Phone: _____ Fax: _____

I will be attending the Regional Conference in:

____ Fort Worth ____ Odessa ____ McAllen ____ Galveston

Enclosed is payment of \$_____ for _____ number of registrations.

Pre-registration fee is \$60. Late and on-site registration is \$70. Registration fee is non-refundable. Pre-registration deadline is July 29, 2005. Purchase orders will be accepted. Please submit proper documentation with registration form if using a purchase order. TPHA Tax ID # is 74-6058233. Returned check fee is \$20, payable by money order. To register online and pay with a credit card, go to www.texaspha.org, and fax your completed registration form to 512/336-0533.

Enclose registration form along with check, purchase order or money order made out to Texas Public Health Association, and mail to:

*Texas Public Health Association/Vital Statistics Conference
P.O. Box 201540
Austin, TX 78720-1540*

Questions about registration? Contact the Texas Public Health Association at 512/336-2520 or at txpha@aol.com.

The Delayed Birth Registration Process

Texas Vital Statistics registers approximately 1800 delayed births a year. These are births that were not registered within one year of the event with the State Office. This may happen because the birth certificate was lost before it got to the local registrar or to Austin, or the birth was just never registered,

Delayed registration is not a simple process. A person wanting to file a delayed birth certificate must first apply for a paid certified copy search with Texas Vital Statistics even if a search of local records shows no certificate. This results in a search of the state birth records, including delayed registrations and probate delayed birth registrations. If a record is found, a certified copy will be sent to the applicant. If no record is found, the applicant will receive forms and instructions for filing a delayed birth certificate.

Once an applicant has the state-issued form (VS-122) to file the delayed birth certificate, the burden of proof lies with the applicant, as the applicant must collect and submit supporting documentation. Family Bible records and certification of birth facts are no longer acceptable documents.

The delayed registration process requires patience and painstakingly detailed work at the State Office. Because delayed birth registration is a

common venue to try to fraudulently register a birth, all documentation is carefully checked before a delayed birth certificate is registered.

Delayed registration must always be done initially through the State Office. Local registrars and county clerks cannot do this function and should destroy any VS-122 forms they might have. When the State Registrar cannot complete a delayed registration, a letter explaining the reasons is sent to the applicant. Only then can the applicant apply for a court-ordered birth certificate by presenting to the court the letter from Texas Vital Statistics and further evidence proving the birth.

Master Registrars

The first Master Registrar Certification Course was held in May. Local registrars and VS staff worked together to study the statutes underlying VS practice, to discuss problematic issues and to share best practices. The Course also focused on preparing them to serve as trainers. All involved felt the course was a valuable experience that strengthened their knowledge and cooperation between locals and VS.

The next Master Registrar Certification Course will be held in Austin, October 3 - 7. To apply, contact Brenda.Briseno@dshs.state.tx.us.

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