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# TEXAS VITAL STATISTICS NEWS

Texas Vital Statistics, Texas Department of State Health Services

Winter, 2005 Vol. 8, No. 1

## TER-Death Update

Texas Vital Statistics staff and a stakeholder advisory group have worked over the past nine months to define the functional specifications for an electronic death registration system, Texas Electronic Registrar (TER)-Death. The design work is nearly complete, and our contractor, Genesis Systems, Inc., has started the computer coding for this application. TER-Death will be designed based on the 2006 Texas Certificate of Death (see related article on this page).

The current schedule for implementation calls for testing of the system in August 2005, with pilot sites to be installed by late September 2005. Electronic death registration will be available and effective in Texas as of January 1, 2006.

Watch for future issues of this quarterly publication and other VS correspondence for more information about training on the TER-Death electronic registration system.



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## Texas Certificate of Death Revision Completed

Texas Vital Statistics has completed the draft revision of the Texas Certificate of Death. The new death certificate will be finalized in the next few months and will be required for all deaths occurring on and after January 1, 2006. The certificate is being revised to meet new federal guidelines for a U.S. Standard Death Certificate (available on the internet at [www.cdc.gov/nchs/vital\\_certs\\_rev.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/vital_certs_rev.htm)).

In preparing the revision, Texas Vital Statistics sent a request for feedback via emails and mass mail-out correspondences. The survey request was sent to individuals and organizations consisting of known past and current data-users, to all local health departments, the Texas Hospital Association, and the Texas Medical Association. The survey comments were utilized as part of our decision-making process. The workgroup made every effort to avoid changing or eliminating any data item that was identified as critical to ongoing research or studies.

It is expected that a growing number of death certificates will be created electronically utilizing the new electronic registration system, Texas Electronic Registrar (TER). However, the need for a manual paper registration process still remains for those participants in the death registration process who do not have Internet access.

The workgroup recognized the need to consider space and formatting in its decision-making. Another consideration was the desire to streamline the certificate in an effort to improve, rather than dilute,

the quality of the information gathered. The U.S. standard certificate has only two new items. Some of the current items are being collected in a different format.

To facilitate implementation of the 2006 death certificate revisions, source providers (funeral homes, medical examiners, physicians, justices of the peace) will be given as much advance notice as possible to initiate any changes they will need to make in procedures, collection tools, technology, etc. The death certificate handbook/resource manual will be revised to include instructions for new and modified items and recommended methods of collection. Statewide implementation of the new certificate will be mandatory, effective January 1, 2006.

## Focus on Consolidation

Consolidation of registration districts in Texas counties is a top priority. Having fewer registration districts has definite benefits for customer service: more consistent filings with fewer rejected records, less likelihood that vital records will be misfiled in the wrong jurisdiction, and less confusion about where customers can obtain their records.

The focus on consolidation has resulted in considerable reduction in the number of registration offices: from 734 in 1991, to 559 in 2001, to the current number of 490.

We encourage all counties to consider the merits of consolidation. To explore this option, contact your Area Representative (see p. 4).

Congratulations to Kleberg, Bastrop and Brazoria Counties, among others, for taking this step.

## Issuance Paper Requirements Under Study

Geraldine R. Harris, the new Texas State Registrar, has delayed the enforcement of the new issuance paper specifications announced in August 2004. The new specifications (see below) for certifications of all Texas births and deaths were adopted by the State Board of Health in July 2004. Since that time, new developments have suggested the need to revisit the issuance paper specifications and the timeframe for implementation.

Several questions have been raised regarding these paper requirements. For example, there is a question as to whether a watermark can practically be incorporated into cardstock wallet-sized certificates.

At the same time that questions were being raised about the specification requirements, the federal government has enacted laws calling for national standards. These standards for issuance paper are under development.

Ms. Harris has established a workgroup to carefully examine the specifications. Until the federal government establishes national standards and the workgroup completes its report of recommendations, Texas Vital Statistics will require only the first 10 specifications, which are substantially the same requirements that were in place prior to the July 2004 action by the Board of Health.

The specifications for issuance paper in Texas registrations districts are as follows:

- (1) consecutive numbers - for control purposes;
- (2) background security features - a repetitious design consisting of a pattern that hinders counterfeiting efforts;
- (3) a copy void pantograph - the word "void" appears when the document is photocopied;
- (4) an engraved border - a border that is produced from engraved artwork containing images from fine lines to very complex patterns;

(5) microline printing or security thread - a line of small alpha characters in capital letters that requires a magnifying glass to read;

(6) sensitized security paper - paper that is reactive to chemicals commonly used to alter documents;

(7) prismatic printing - a rainbow printing that is used as a deterrent to color copying;

(8) erasable fluorescent printing - fluoresces under ultraviolet light and reacts to any attempt to erase in such a manner as to be immediately detectable;

(9) non-optical brighteners - paper without added optical paper brighteners that will not fluoresce under ultraviolet light;

(10) complex colors - colors that are developed by using a mixture of two or more of the primary colors (red, yellow and blue) and black is required;

(11) intaglio printing - the printing process in which the paper is firmly pressed into the inked engraved plate and, then when the paper is removed, the ink sticks to the top of the paper, creating a texture that can be felt when touched;

(12) latent image - designs in the engraved border that contain hidden images printed by intaglio process that appear only when viewed from a prescribed angle to a light source; and

(13) watermark - a three-dimensional graphic element molded into the paper in a continuous pattern during the paper manufacturing process.

If your office is using banknote security paper with the last three specifications, please continue to do so until further notice. Local registrars will have at least twelve months to prepare for any change in what will be legally accepted in Texas.



## Conference Debriefing

Texas Vital Statistics, in conjunction with the co-sponsoring Texas Public Health Association, hosted the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Vital Statistics Conference, Dec. 5-7, 2004, in Austin. This event proved to be very special, as it was not only the 50th educational conference, but also the conference with the largest attendance in the history of the event, with over 650 participants.

The theme of the conference was "Future Directions," and the presentations, panels and discussions were focused on preparing for the many upcoming changes in vital statistics. With birth registration transitioning from a paper-driven process to on-line registration in 2005, and with electronic death registration on the horizon in 2006, multiple sessions focused on new technologies and processes. Extensive training was offered on the new Texas Certificate of Birth. (See related story on p. 4.)

Other topics included security of confidential records, fraud prevention, the Texas Medical Examiner system, establishment of paternity, the Immunization Registry, ethics in death registration, and delivering great customer service.

Other highlights of the conference included peer lunches, the Anniversary Banquet, focus groups, exhibits and the guided tours of Texas Vital Statistics office.

Conference Coordinator Susan Rodriguez reports that session and conference evaluations completed by participants will be studied closely to identify ways to make the 51st Annual Conference even bigger and better. If you have a great idea or a burning training need, please be sure to let her know at [SusanL.Rodriguez@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:SusanL.Rodriguez@dshs.state.tx.us).

Special congratulations to Cheryl Jones, HIM Director, Graham Regional Medical Center, for completing her conference evaluation and winning the special drawing for the stay at Embassy Suites in Austin!

## VS Five-Star Award & OAG Hospital Paternity Award Recipients Honored

One of the highlights of the 2004 Vital Statistics Conference was the 50th Anniversary Banquet on December 6, 2004. The hotel ballroom was the scene of an elegant dinner and an award-studded program honoring excellent performance in 2004. Casey Hoffman, Deputy Attorney General for Families & Children, Office of the Attorney General, delivered congratulatory remarks and honored 70 recipients of the 2004 Attorney General Hospital Paternity Awards. Also honored were the recipients of the 2004 Five-Star Award in three categories: Local Registrar, Funeral Home & Mortuary Services and Hospital & Birthing Centers. We thank and congratulate all award recipients for their dedication. The 2004 Five-Star Award recipients are listed below.

### LOCAL REGISTRAR HONOREES

#### Recognized:

Baytown Municipal Court  
Beaumont Public Health Dept.  
City of Amarillo  
City of Austin HHS  
City of Bedford  
City of Laredo Health Dept.  
City of Lewisville  
City of Lubbock  
City of McAllen  
City of North Richland Hills  
City of Palestine  
City of Pasadena Dept. of Health  
City of Paris  
City of Temple  
City of Texarkana  
City of Uvalde  
City of Victoria  
City of Weslaco  
Collin County Clerk  
Cooke County Clerk  
Dewitt County Clerk  
Ector County Clerk  
Galveston County Health Dept.  
Goliad County Clerk  
Gonzales County Clerk  
Grayson County Clerk  
Guadalupe County Clerk  
Hood County Clerk  
Kaufman County Clerk  
Limestone County Clerk  
Madison County Clerk  
Maverick County Clerk  
Parker County Clerk  
Polk County Clerk  
Reeves County Clerk  
Rockwall County Clerk  
Runnels County Clerk  
Rusk County Clerk  
Tom Green County Clerk  
Ward County Clerk  
Wichita Falls Health Dept.  
Wise County Clerk  
Williamson County Clerk

#### Exemplary:

Abilene/Taylor Co. P.H. District  
City of Bryan Vital Statistics Office  
City of Edinburg  
City of Grapevine  
City of Harlingen  
City of Mission  
City of Yoakum  
Comal County Clerk  
Kerr County Clerk  
Taylor County Clerk

### FUNERAL HOME & MORTUARY SERVICES HONOREES

Calvillo Funeral Home  
Ceballos-Diaz Funeral Home  
Coker Funeral Home  
James Crowder Funeral Home  
Jones-Washington Mortuary  
Kerrville Funeral Home  
Rader Funeral Home  
Scanio-Harper Funeral Home  
Winscott Road Funeral Home

### HOSPITAL & BIRTHING CENTER HONOREES

Baylor Medical Ctr. at Garland  
Baylor Medical Ctr. at Waxahachie  
Baylor Medical Center Irving  
Bayshore Medical Center  
Brazosport Memorial Hospital  
Brownfield Regional Medical Ctr.  
Brownsville Surgical Hospital  
Christus Spohn Hospital South  
Christus St. Michael Health System  
Citizens Medical Center  
Clear Lake Regional Medical Ctr.  
Cleveland Regional Medical Center  
Corpus Christi Med. Ctr., Doctors  
Del Sol Medical Center  
Denton Community Hospital  
Detar Hospital  
Dimmit County Memorial Hospital  
Fayette Memorial Hospital  
Georgetown Hospital  
Guadalupe Valley Hospital  
Harris Methodist Erath County  
Harris Methodist HEB Hospital  
Highland Medical Center  
Hill Country Memorial Hospital  
Houston Northwest Medical Center  
Huguley Memorial Medical Center  
King's Daughters Hospital  
Las Colinas Medical Center  
Las Palmas Medical Center

McKenna Memorial Hospital  
Memorial Hospital Gonzales  
Memorial Hospital Seminole  
Memorial Hermann The Woodlands  
Memorial Medical Center Lufkin  
Memorial Medical Ctr. Port Lavaca  
Methodist Hospital  
Methodist Willowbrook Hospital  
Metropolitan Methodist Hospital  
North Central Baptist Hospital  
Ochiltree General Hospital  
Palestine Regional Medical Center  
Presbyterian Hospital of Plano  
Round Rock Medical Center  
San Jacinto Methodist Hospital  
Seton Medical Center  
Shannon West Texas Memorial  
Sierra Medical Center  
South Austin Hospital  
South Texas Regional Medical Ctr.  
St. David's Hospital  
St. Luke's Baptist Hospital  
Tomball Regional Hospital  
United Regional Health Care System  
University Hospital  
Uvalde Memorial Hospital  
Valley Baptist Med. Ctr. Brownsville  
Ward Memorial Hospital  
W. J. Mangold Memorial Hospital

## New Birth Certificate & TER-Birth Implemented

On Jan. 1, 2005, Texas changed the birth certificate in order to meet new federal standards. While the legal certificate changed very little, 40 new items of medical information were added; 40 were removed; and about 22 were changed. These changes are in support of state and national research to improve outcomes for mothers and babies.

The implementation of the new birth certificate coincided with the full implementation of TER-Birth, the new electronic birth registration system. While many hospitals and local registrars had already transitioned to use of TER-Birth prior to the first of the year, 2005 marked the end of the Certificate Manager birth registration system

and a complete change in the flow of birth registration in Texas.

So many changes at once can be overwhelming. Hospitals and birthing centers have been asked to collect new information and to install and use a new electronic system. Local registrars also have also been asked to install and use this system to retrieve birth certificates and to register non-institutional births. Many offices, including the state office, have undergone substantial change in who and how birth registration is processed to accommodate the new standards.

We thank all participating for their cooperation, patience and flexibility as we work together to use this new system to maximum benefit.

## Master Registrar Certification & Other Training

We are dedicated to providing you the information and training needed to ensure a great vital statistics system in Texas. To that end, we have multiple training events planned for 2005.

This year, Texas Vital Statistics will be hosting the first Master Registrar Certification Training class. This specialized class is intended for a small group of experienced registrars, and you must apply to participate. This three-day class will be held on the Austin campus of Texas Department of State Health Services, May 3 - 5, 2005.

If you want to apply to attend this

intensive class, please request the application via e-mail at [Christi.Cantu@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:Christi.Cantu@dshs.state.tx.us). Applications are due by 3-15-2005.

Other training events are on the horizon. Watch future newsletters for more info about dates, sites and registration for these events.

- AOP Certification/Birth Registration training, sites throughout the state, Summer 2005;
- One-day conferences in Arlington, Odessa, McAllen and Galveston, August 2005; and
- 51st Annual Vital Statistics Conference in Austin, December 2005.

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### Correction:

The last issue introduced **Andy Abrams**, the Lead Investigator for the Vital Statistics Fraud Office. Please note Mr. Abram's correct e-mail address:  
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