

Tips for Funeral Directors and other Signers of Demographic Information on the Preliminary Report of Death

July, 2008

1. Please print or type and do not use abbreviations

Whenever a death is reported using the paper method (Preliminary Report of Death) it will need to be faxed to Vital Records for entry into the Electronic Death Registration System prior to becoming a Death Certificate. Therefore it is critical that the information on these forms is clear and legible. If we can not read what you have written you will receive a call to confirm the contents before the report will be processed and a certificate can be produced for the family.

2. Address every question

Please avoid leaving fields blank as this leaves open to question whether the answer is unknown or if the item was just not addressed. If you do not know the required information "Unknown" is generally an acceptable answer. However, if any of the following demographic fields are left blank or are illegible, you will receive a call to confirm the contents before the report can be processed and a death certificate can be produced for the family.

- Legal Name
- Age
- Date of Birth
- Birth Place
- Residence
- Informant's Name
- Place of Death Type (item 20)
- Place of Death - Facility Name (enter address if not an institution)
- Place of Death – State (Must be Vermont)
- Place of Death - City/Town
- Method of Disposition
- Place & Location of Temporary Storage (if Temporary Storage is indicated as the Method of Disposition)
- Place of Final Disposition
- Location of Final Disposition
- Name of Funeral Facility or Authorized Person
- Address of Funeral Facility or Authorized Person
- Signature of Funeral Director or Authorized Person
- Date of Disposition

If you have questions or are unsure about how to address a specific field, please contact Vital Records. Many answers can also be found in the CDC publication *Funeral Directors' Handbook on Death Registration and Fetal Death Reporting* (2003 Revision). While this does not cover Vermont Specific questions, it does address many of the new questions since these are based on the 2003 U.S. Standard Death Certificate. A copy has been included in this mailing. It is also available on line at: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/vital_certs_rev.htm . You will find it listed under "Handbooks for Death Certificate".

3. Review information provided by Physicians before submitting to Vital Records

Check that the correct form has been used -- If a death is certified on the old death certificate it will be returned and need to be signed again on a 2008 Preliminary Report of Death. Vital Records is doing outreach to all physicians who have signed a certificate in the past two years as well as all hospitals, practices, nursing homes and other organizations to spread the word about the change in forms, however, it is likely that old forms may still get used. If you encounter a physician who does not have the new form you can direct them to contact Vital Records at 800-439-5008. This form will also be available for printing online at <http://healthvermont.gov/hc/EDRS/index.aspx> beginning July 1, 2008.

Check for completeness -- Physicians have been sent directions which emphasize providing complete and legible information, and Vital Records staff will assume the responsibility of following-up with them if we receive something that is illegible or blank. However, it will prevent delays if these are caught prior to the form being submitted. So, you are encouraged to make a quick review of the medical section when you receive it and notify the physician of any issues that you may detect.

Items that will result in Vital Records needing to call a physician if they are not complete or legible include:

- Manner of Death
- Cause of Death Part I
- Actual or Presumed Date & Time of Death -- (if unknown, enter "unknown", Time must indicate AM/PM)
- Date & Time Pronounced (Time must include AM / PM)
- Signature of Certifier
- Date Certified
- Name of Certifier (printed)
- Address of Certifying Physician
- Title of Certifier

4. When Faxing a Preliminary Report of Death to Vital Records...

When a Preliminary Report of Death has been completed and signed by all parties, you will need to fax it to Vital Records for the information to be entered into the EDRS, so a death certificate can be produced. The number to use for this is:

802-651-1787

Include a cover sheet with contact information – Although this is not required since your contact information will likely be on the actual document, it would be helpful to also include a coversheet in case there are any problems reading the Preliminary Report. A model coversheet has been included in this mailing.

Call if faxing on weekend or holiday -- Our machine will be set up to receive faxes at all hours and it will save a fax and let us print it later in cases where the paper runs out or there is some other mechanical problem (including power outage). However, if there are any troubles with the actual connection we will not know that a message was missed. So, if you are faxing on a weekend you may wish to also call and leave a message to assure we know that a record was sent.

5. Obtaining Certified Copies of Death Certificates

Once Vital Records has received the PROD and entered it into the EDRS a death certificate will be made available to the Town Clerk. Clerks who are enrolled as EDRS users will be able to print the certificate as soon as it is entered by Vital Records. All other clerks will be mailed a copy the day it is entered. We have focused on enrolling all clerks in hospital towns and in towns with nursing homes by July 1. Others will be brought on as soon after as possible. **Please call the Town Clerk to check on the availability of a certificate before showing up in person to request certified copies!**

6. Contact the Vital Records Office by e-mail at EDRS@vdh.state.vt.us or by phone at 800-439-5008 if you have questions.

Additional information can also be found on the VDH Web site (healthvermont.gov). On the main page select "Health Care Professionals" and then go to "Education and Training".