

## **Changes to the Medical Portion of the Vermont Death Certificate as of July 1, 2008**

Death certificates are a critical source of information for state, federal and even international public health programs; therefore, the changes to the death certificate were designed to elicit more specific data, which will in turn guide and enhance public health planning. The revised death certificate includes seven new questions along with modifications to some existing questions. One new question which we anticipate will result in data of particular interest to the medical community (although it will be completed by funeral directors or the family) is whether the deceased received hospice care in the 30 days prior to his or her death. Here are the changes on the medical certification section:

### **New Questions for Medical Certifiers**

- IF FEMALE:
  - Not pregnant within past year
  - Not pregnant, but pregnant within 42 days of death
  - Not pregnant, but pregnant 43 days to 1 year before death
  - Pregnant at time of death
  - Unknown if pregnant within the past year

*This information is important in determining the scale of mortality amongst this population and will be of assistance to maternal mortality review programs. The level of detail reflects the information needed for better cause of death coding, using ICD-10.*

- WAS MEDICAL EXAMINER CONTACTED
  - Yes \_\_\_\_\_  No

*This question comes from the U.S. Standard Certificate of Death and records whether the Medical Examiner was informed when circumstances warrant this, including cases that should be referred for certification.*

- IF TRANSPORTATION INJURY, SPECIFY:
  - Driver/Operator
  - Pedestrian
  - Passenger
  - Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

*Because all non-natural deaths, including those that are the result of injury, must be reported to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, most physicians will not address this question. However, the data collected here will help assign deaths to categories that may be used to assess trends and effectiveness of public safety programs.*

- VT LICENSE NUMBER

*Physicians will now be asked to provide their license number as part of the reporting process. Some of you already provide this information (thank you!), although there is not a field for it on the current Vermont death certificate. With the introduction of the EDRS this number will be important in establishing an electronic signature. The license number will not appear on the death certificate.*

### **Revised Questions for Medical Certifiers**

- ACTUAL OR PRESUMED DATE OF DEATH (formerly "Date of Death")
- ACTUAL OR PRESUMED TIME OF DEATH (formerly "Hour of Death")

*These two questions have been revised to be more comprehensive.*

- TITLE OF CERTIFIER:
  - Physician
  - Pathologist
  - Medical Examiner

*The categories "Attending Physician" and "Staff Physician" have been replaced by "Physician".*