

## Vital Records Rule

### 1.0 Authority

This rule is adopted pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 5000 (e) and (f).

### 2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this rule is to establish the specific requirements for obtaining, creating, storing and disposing of birth and death certificates in Vermont.

### 3.0 Definitions

- 3.1** “Affidavit of Homeless Status” means the form published by the Department that can be used to verify an individual’s status as a homeless person for the purposes of obtaining a certified birth certificate. The affidavit must be signed by both the applicant and the homeless services provider.
- 3.2** “Alternate means of identification” means two documents (exempting 3.2.12 and 3.2.13 when only one form of identification is needed) that between them shall contain a current address and a signature of the applicant. Alternate acceptable documents are:
- 3.2.1 Employment Identification Card with photo, accompanied by a pay stub or U.S. Internal Revenue Service W-2 form;
  - 3.2.2 School, university, or college identification card with photo, accompanied by a report card or other proof of current school enrollment;
  - 3.2.3 Federal or state identification issued by departments, bureaus, or agencies of corrections or prisons;
  - 3.2.4 Social Security/Medicare Card that contains the bearer’s signature;
  - 3.2.5 Pilot’s License;
  - 3.2.6 Car registration or title with current address;
  - 3.2.7 U.S. Selective Service Card;
  - 3.2.8 Voter Registration Card;
  - 3.2.9 Filed Federal tax form that contains current address and signatures;
  - 3.2.10 Bank statement, property or utility bill (e.g. gas, water, electric, sewer, phone) with current address;

- 3.2.11 U.S. or state court documents with current address;
  - 3.2.12 Documentation provided by the Vermont Department of Corrections substantiating the identity of the eligible person; or
  - 3.2.13 A valid State of Vermont Employee identification when the application for a birth and/or death certificate is a bona fide request made within the scope of employment with the State.
- 3.3** “Custodian” means any person or entity who maintains official copies of vital records for access and inspection by the public, or any lawful purpose, including the Department of Health, Vermont State Archives and Records Administration and town clerks.
- 3.4** “Eligible party” means the same as defined in 18 V.S.A. § 5016(b)(2):
- 3.4.1 The registrant or his or her spouse, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, or guardian; a person petitioning to open a decedent's estate; a court-appointed executor or administrator; or the legal representative of any of these;
  - 3.4.2 A specific person pursuant to a court order finding that a noncertified copy is not sufficient for the applicant's legal purpose and that a certified copy of the birth or death certificate is needed for the determination or protection of a person's right; or
  - 3.4.3 In the case of a death certificate only, additionally to:
    - 3.4.3.1 the individual with authority for final disposition as provided 18 V.S.A. § 5227, or a funeral home or crematorium acting on the individual's behalf;
    - 3.4.3.2 the Social Security Administration;
    - 3.4.3.3 the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; or
    - 3.4.3.4 the deceased's insurance carrier, if such carrier provides benefits to the decedent's survivors or beneficiaries.
- 3.5** “Generational identifier” means JR, SR, or numerals to designate the number of generations. Generational identifiers may not take the form of commonly conferred academic honorifics such as, but not limited to: MD, JD, DO, Esq., BA, BS, MA, MS, or PhD, or other designations not commonly used as generational identifiers.
- 3.6** “Homeless”, “homeless individual”, and “homeless person” means the same as defined by [42 USC § 11302](#).
- 3.7** “Homeless services provider” means:
- 3.7.1 A governmental or nonprofit agency receiving federal, state, or municipal funding to provide services to a “homeless person” or that is otherwise sanctioned to provide those services by a local homeless continuum of care organization.
  - 3.7.2 An attorney licensed to practice law in Vermont and who is representing

a client for whom the request for a certified birth certificate is being made.

3.7.3 A local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youth, or a school social worker.

3.7.4 A human services provider or public social services provider funded by the State of Vermont to provide homeless children or youth services, health services, mental or behavioral health services, substance use disorder services, public assistance or employment services.

**3.8** “Issuing agent” means a town clerk or duly authorized representative of the State Registrar who issues certified and noncertified copies of vital records.

**3.9** “Secure facility” means a building or room equipped with locks or other security devices that does not permit access during non-working or non-business hours.

**3.10** “Valid government-issued identification” means a document that shall contain an expiration date that has not passed, a photograph, a current address, a signature and a unique number or barcode such as a driver’s license, or valid passport, assigned to the person. The following forms of government-issued identification are acceptable:

3.10.1 United States issued Driver’s License or Identification card;

3.10.2 United States Territories Driver’s License or Identification Card;

3.10.3 Tribal Identification Card that contains the bearer’s signature;

3.10.4 U.S. Military Identification Card that contains the bearer’s signature;

3.10.5 Passport issued by the United States, or by a foreign country recognized by the United States government;

3.10.6 Visa issued by the United States and that is included within a passport and the bearer’s signature is on the passport and not on the Visa;

3.10.7 U.S. Resident Alien Card, also known as the U.S. Green Card or the U.S. Permanent Resident Card (Form I-551); or

3.10.8 U.S. Employment Authorization Document / Card (Form I-765 or successor form).

#### **4.0 Documents Needed to Obtain a Birth or Death Certificate**

**4.1** An applicant is required to provide a valid government-issued identification document or alternate means of identification and must present the identification at time of signing the Vermont application for a certified copy of a birth or death certificate.

**4.2** An applicant may establish their identity by providing a minimum of two alternate means of identification (exempting 3.2.12 and 3.2.13 when only one form of identification is needed). The Office of Vital Records may request additional evidence as necessary for the positive identification of the applicant.

**4.3** A homeless individual may establish their identity necessary to be eligible to receive a certified birth certificate by providing a completed Affidavit of

Homeless Status. The Affidavit must be signed by the applicant and the homeless services provider. The Office of Vital Records may request additional documentation as necessary for the positive identification of the applicant.

## **5.0 Applications for Certified Copies of Birth and Death Certificates**

**5.1** The Vermont application for a certified copy of birth or death certificate must be submitted by an eligible party to:

- 5.1.1 the Vermont Office of Vital Records;
- 5.1.2 the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration;
- 5.1.3 a statutorily authorized issuing agent, such as town clerk's office; or
- 5.1.4 a contractor of the State of Vermont that is providing application processing services on behalf of the Vermont Office of Vital Records.

## **6.0 Certification of Birth and Death Certificates by Town Clerks and Their Designees**

**6.1** Town clerks and their designees shall certify a birth or death certificate copy using one of the following methods:

- 6.1.1 Use of a town seal that does not include the town clerk's name, and ensures all documents are signed by either the town clerk, assistant town clerk, or another designated assistant clerk pursuant to state statute; or
- 6.1.2 Use of a town seal that includes the town clerk's name, and ensures all documents using that seal are signed by the town clerk whose name is on the seal.

## **7.0 Issuance of Certified Copies of Births and Deaths During a Declared State of Emergency or Other Disruption**

**7.1** The State Registrar may temporarily suspend the requirement for issuing agents to utilize the statewide registration system for the issuance of certified copies of birth and death certificates. The reasons for a temporary suspension are limited to:

- 7.1.1 A declared state of emergency that covers the State of Vermont when the period has exceeded 48 hours;
- 7.1.2 A technical event with the statewide registration system that results in the system being inaccessible to issuing agents for a period that exceeds 48 hours.

**7.2** During a period in which a temporary suspension has been issued, the State Registrar shall provide instruction to the issuing agents for the methods to be used to issue and track all certified copies, and for later recording in the statewide registration system when service has been restored.

## **8.0 Physical Security Requirements for Creation and Storage of Birth and Death Certificates**

**8.1** Activities to support the creation, storage and issuance of certified copies of Vermont birth and death certificates shall occur in secure, government-operated buildings. The area of the building that houses the Vermont birth and death certificates, and materials utilized to create, modify or access the certificates, and

the computers used to access the statewide registration system, shall meet the following requirements:

- 8.1.1 Contains appropriate sensor, warning systems, or controls in place to monitor for fire, smoke or other emergencies;
  - 8.1.2 Contains a fire suppression method, which may be dry- or wet-suppression, and/or fire extinguishers;
  - 8.1.3 Is a secure facility;
  - 8.1.4 Employee work space is separated from the public, such as by service counter, service window, locked door, or other physical barrier;
  - 8.1.5 Non-employees, such as, but not limited to, visitors, vendors, delivery personnel, and cleaning staff, must identify themselves to the town clerk or their designee, and request access to the space that contains the birth and death certificate materials, the certificates themselves, and/or the computers used to access the statewide registration system, providing a valid and reasonable reason for such access. These non-employees shall be escorted to the designated area. If cleaning is done during nonworking hours, only preapproved cleaning personnel shall be permitted access to the space that contains the birth and death certificate materials, the certificates themselves, and/or the computers used to access the statewide registration system;
  - 8.1.6 All materials used for certification of the birth and death certificates, such as, but not limited to, equipment (computers, printers, town seal), security paper, and any other documents or confidential files/records, shall be locked in a secure area or cabinets accessible only to the town clerk and their designees;
  - 8.1.7 Visitors shall be accompanied when such visitors may have access to the materials used for certification of birth and death certificates, or access to the statewide registration system.
- 8.2** If an existing government-operated building does not have a fireproof safe or vault as specified in 18 V.S.A. § 5001(b), the town clerk shall ensure that these rules are complied with and confirm in writing to the State Registrar that all reasonable precautions and safeguards have been implemented to protect the birth and death certificate materials, the birth and death certificates, and the computer used to access the statewide registration system.
- 8.3** The public shall be allowed access to view or inspect birth and death certificates stored at issuing agent's offices during the standard business hours of the office. Issuing agents may implement reasonable precautions to protect the certificates from potential harm or theft, such as, but not limited to:
- 8.3.1 Monitoring visitors;
  - 8.3.2 Requiring visitors to view/inspect certificates at a designated table or office;
  - 8.3.3 Retrieving only the birth and death certificates requested by the visitor

rather than providing unlimited access to all certificates;

- 8.3.4 Requiring visitors to sign in and out when requesting access to birth and death certificates; and/or
- 8.3.5 Requiring visitors to show the contents of any bags, briefcases or other storage methods prior to departing the office.

## **9.0 Criteria for Acceptance of Child’s Name on Birth Certificates**

**9.1** In order to be valid, names on birth certificates shall:

- 9.1.1 Not contain pictographs or ideographs or writing that is not part of the standard twenty-six letter English alphabet;
- 9.1.2 Not contain symbols other than:
  - 9.1.2.1 Numerals used for generational identifiers;
  - 9.1.2.2 Common punctuation such as hyphens for hyphenated names, apostrophes used as part of a given name or surname, and periods in generational identifiers or when an initial or abbreviation is used as part of a name; or
  - 9.1.2.3 Special characters that are commonly used, such as accent marks and tildes.
- 9.1.3 Not exceed a total of 50 characters in length for each of First, Middle, and Last Name. The count of maximum allowable characters shall include hyphens, apostrophes, and periods when used as part of the name.
- 9.1.4 Contain a last name.
- 9.1.5 Contain no more than one generational identifier after the last name.

## **10.0 Disposal of Original Birth and Death Certificates**

**10.1** Pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 5073(d), 18 V.S.A. § 5075(e) and 18 V.S.A. § 5202a(e), “replace and dispose” shall include the following:

- 10.1.1 The custodian of the birth or death certificate confirms they have accurately identified the certificate that is to be removed; and
  - 10.1.1.1 The custodian shreds the certificate using a paper shredder that is in the office of the issuing agent, or places the certificate in a storage container that is used solely for the collection of off-site shredding by a contractor; or
  - 10.1.1.2 The certificate is placed into a recycling container that will be collected by an off-site shredding contractor within 24 hours of the certificate’s disposal.