

DOCUMENTATION OF THE  
FETAL DEATH TAPE FILE FOR  
2001 DATA

SPECIAL NOTICE

THE GEOGRAPHIC CODES WERE  
CHANGED EFFECTIVE WITH 1994  
DATA TO REFLECT THE RESULTS  
OF THE 1990 CENSUS.

FETAL DEATHS FOR PUERTO RICO,  
VIRGIN ISLANDS, AND GUAM ARE  
INCLUDED IN A SEPARATE DATA SET  
IN THE PUBLIC-USE FILE

## Documentation of the Fetal Death Tape File for Data

This tape documentation was prepared in the Division of Vital Statistics. Steve Steimel of the Systems Programming and Statistical Resources Branch was responsible for updating the fetal death documentation. Joyce Martin of the Reproductive Statistics Branch was responsible for providing all needed modifications to keep the documentation up-to-date. Joyce Martin and Donna Hoyert of the Mortality Statistics Branch prepared the Fetal Death Technical Appendix. The Registration Methods Staff and the Data Acquisition and Evaluation Branch provided consultation to State vital statistics offices regarding collection of fetal death data.

Questions concerning the documentation or general questions concerning the fetal death file should be directed to the Systems and Programming Branch, Division of Vital Statistics, NCHS, 6525 Belcrest Road, Room 840 Hyattsville, Maryland 20782 (301-458-4523).

Questions concerning the Technical Appendix or substantive questions concerning the fetal death or natality data should be directed to the Reproductive Statistics Branch, Division of Vital Statistics, NCHS, 6525 Belcrest Road, Room 840, Hyattsville Maryland 20782 (301-458-4362).

## Documentation of the Fetal Death Tape Files for 2001 Data

Information on the US fetal death data tape file was abstracted from the Report of Fetal Death forms received in all the States and the District of Columbia, with a record on the data file for each report of a fetal death received. The data is provided to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program by the registration offices of all States, the District of Columbia, and New York City. Fetal deaths for Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and Guam are included a separate data set in the public-use file. Data from Arizona, California, Louisiana, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wyoming, and Guam were coded and keyed by NCHS. All other 2001 data were submitted in machine readable form.

US Fetal death data are limited to deaths occurring within the United States to U.S. residents and nonresidents. Fetal deaths occurring to U.S. citizens outside the United States are not included in this data file. Fetal death data for Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and Guam are limited to deaths occurring within the respective territories.

In NCHS tabulations by place of residence, fetal deaths to nonresidents of the United States are excluded. The foreign resident records can be identified by code 4 in tape location 7 of the data tape. In addition, the majority of fetal death tables published by NCHS include only those fetal deaths with stated or presumed gestation of 20 weeks or more (see the Technical Appendix). Those records identified with a 2 in tape location 5 are included in these tabulations. All other records are excluded.

Effective January 1, 1989, a revised U.S. Standard Report of Fetal Death replaced the 1978 revision. The 1989 revision provides a wide variety of new information on maternal and fetal health characteristics. Questions on complications of labor and delivery and congenital anomalies of fetus were changed from an open-ended question to a checkbox format to improve reporting of information. Several new items were added that improve the data file's value for monitoring and research of factors affecting fetal mortality.

The Office of Management and Budget revised its designation of metropolitan statistical areas based on figures from the 1990 Census. For the 1990 through 1993 data files, NCHS has been using these new definitions and codes as indicated in the listing of 320 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs), and New England County Metropolitan Areas (NECMAs) that were included in the documentation for those years. There are also 20 Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (CMSAs), which are made up of PMSAs. Because other geographic changes based on the 1990 Census became effective with the 1994 data file, the metropolitan statistical area designations were updated as well. Effective with the 1994 data file there are 311 MSAs, PMSA, and NECMAs and 18 CMSAs as indicated in the listing included in this documentation.

## Documentation of the Fetal Death Tape File for 2001 Data

NCHS has adopted a new policy on release of vital statistics unit record data files. This new policy was implemented with the 1989 vital event files to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of individuals and institutions. As a result, this file does not contain the actual day of the death. The geographic detail is also restricted; only counties and cities of 100,000 or more population based on the 1990 Census as well as metropolitan areas of 100,000 or more population based on the 1990 Census, are identified.