

REPORT TO THE TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE  
STATE OF HAWAII  
2007

PURSUANT TO ACT 160, SECTION 36.2,  
SESSION LAWS OF HAWAII 2006, REQUIRING THE  
OFFICE OF HEALTH STATUS MONITORING TO PREPARE  
A YEARLY DETAILED PROGRESS REPORT ON THE  
REINVENTION OF THE VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEM

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
REPORT TO THE 2007 LEGISLATURE

PURSUANT TO ACT 160, SECTION 36.2, SESSION LAWS OF HAWAII 2006,  
REQUIRING THE OFFICE OF HEALTH STATUS MONITORING TO PREPARE A  
YEARLY DETAILED PROGRESS REPORT ON THE REINVENTION OF THE  
VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEM

The purpose of the reinvention of the vital statistics system has been to computerize the registration and issuance of vital records and to make maximum use of available technology. Vital statistics consist of births, deaths and marriages. The over-all reinvention of vital statistics includes (a) identifying procedural inefficiencies in facility, staff and equipment to improve service to the public and recommend improvements, (b) work with existing staff to streamline operations, (c) eliminate unnecessary procedures, (d) identify areas of complaints and make improvements, (e) identify privacy legal issues which prohibit disclosure of vital records information and seek solutions that are in compliance with laws and policy, (f) develop technical and non-technical means of protecting against identity fraud and ensure that vital records are issued only to persons eligible to obtain them, and (g) ensure that payment is received for all vital records that are issued, consistent with the requirements of the Hawaii Revised Statutes.

Improvements in the above reinvention areas were accomplished throughout the period July 1, 2005-December 30, 2006 but the primary project consisted of the following:

In September 2003 the Department of Health (DOH) was awarded a \$500,000 Social Security Administration (SSA) grant to develop and implement an Electronic Death Registration (EDR) system. The specific reason for the grant by SSA was for DOH to provide electronically to the SSA the timely date of death for everyone who dies in Hawaii. This would allow the SSA to stop payment of SS benefits to persons no longer eligible to receive them and to modify the payments to other SS recipients. This would ensure large savings for SSA. DOH receives \$2.54 for each fact-of-death reported within 5 days after the death, \$1.27 if within 30 days, and \$.71 if more than 30 days. With approximately 9,000 deaths per year, this would amount to approximately \$23,000 additional revenue to the State yearly if there is an effective EDR system. As of September 29, 2006, DOH fulfilled all SSA contractual requirements.

OHSM used the SSA money to streamline the total death registration process and to meet the SSA requirements. Thus, certified copies of death certificate are issued quicker and grieving family members settle their financial and other death-related matters in a timely matter. In turn OHSM received fewer inquiries and complaints that have to be answered by the staff. The major reinvention goal for the fiscal year July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2006 was to streamline the registration of deaths and the issuance of death certificates. During that year the planning and implementation of the EDR system supplanted much of the outmoded paper-based system. To ensure success of the EDR project it was necessary to

(1) coordinate with the Office of Health Status Monitoring (OHSM) staff; (2) ensure that the operation of the project complied with statutes, regulations and procedures as they relate to death; and, (3) work with the software vendor/computer programmers, hospitals, mortuaries, funeral homes, physicians, the Honolulu medical examiner, coroner's physicians, coroners, the District Health offices, the Health Information Systems Office (HISO), the Attorney General's office, and the State Registrar of vital statistics. The first version of the software was developed in 2005 and the roles of all the major participants were established. The mortuaries are responsible for entering personal information about the deceased on the death form and seeing that the registration of the death is reported to OHSM. The physicians are responsible for entering the cause-of-death on the form. The project went into effect on January 1, 2006 and by June 30, 2006 the following agents/agencies were participating in the EDR project:

- All 23 Mortuaries/Funeral homes, which includes 93 Funeral Home Directors.
- 4 hospitals (Kaiser, Kapiolani, Queen's & Wilcox) and two long care facilities.
- 114 Private Physicians.
- All 5 Medical Examiners (C&C of Honolulu).
- All 6 Coroner's Physicians (Hawaii, Kauai & Maui counties).
- All 3 Coroners (Chiefs of Police for Hawaii, Kauai, & Maui counties) and their Deputy Coroners. Also participating are Records Clerks and/or Police Officers for Hawaii, Kauai & Maui Police Departments.
- All 6 Coroner's Clerks at Pan Pacific Pathologists, Inc., who refer cases to the Coroner's Physicians for Hawaii, Kauai & Maui counties.
- Office of Health Status Monitoring Staff and District Health Offices.
- Hawaii Information Consortium (eHawaii; software developer).
- Health Information Systems Office (DOH).

The participation of 114 individual physicians, 5 Medical Examiners (C&C of Honolulu) and 6 Coroner's Physicians were participating in the EDR project as of June 30<sup>th</sup>, with approximately 20% of all deaths being completed electronically by both mortuaries and physicians. By the end of 2006 the number of physicians participating in EDR increased to 153, with an increase to approximately 27% of all deaths being completed by both mortuaries and physicians. For non-participating physicians, the mortuaries or hospitals complete their portion of the certificate electronically and drop it to paper for the physician to complete the cause-of-death by hand. OHSM staff then enter the cause-of-death information electronically into the EDR system. The focus has been on obtaining participation from physicians who do 10 or more death certificates per year. There has been a steady increase in the participation of individual physicians since the beginning of the project. Continuous enhancements in the software have been undertaken to make for a more efficient system. Considerable work still has to be done as of January 1, 2007 to complete the project, with further software enhancements required and the need for more physicians to become participants in the EDR system.

The EDR system has shown the following improvements in the filing and processing of deaths since changing over from the old paper-based system:

- Backlog of deaths to be processed is practically none with the processing keeping up with the incoming flow of death registrations. With the paper certificates there were constant backlogs in the different sections in OHSM since the paper had to be carried from one section to another and the information had to be manually entered.
- Certified copies of death certificates are now normally ready to be issued within 6-8 business days after the date-of-death. This is true of all the islands in the state. Prior to the EDR system, deaths on the Neighbor Islands normally took 17-25 business days before they were ready to be issued. Deaths on Oahu normally took 12-15 business days.
- In times of urgent need, the EDR system makes it possible to issue certified death certificates on the same day as a death occurs. This was an almost impossible accomplishment with the paper-based system.
- People can now come to our office in Honolulu during business hours and obtain computer-generated certified certificates while they wait. Before EDR, a customer would have to wait two weeks to receive a certificate because the original certificate had to be located and photo-copied.

The EDR project was officially implemented on January 1, 2006. The approximate costs for the project are shown in the table on the next page.

The EDR project will continue for one more year to complete enhancements in the software and to increase the number of participating physicians. It is recommended that the over-all Reinvention project be continued for two more years after EDR is completed in order to develop the Electronic Marriage Registration System (EMRS).

A minor reinvention goal was to study the process required for the registration and issuance of marriage certificates. This future project will be the Electronic Marriage Registration System (EMRS). An initial step was taken during the fiscal year by teaching the Marriage Agents how to transfer their marriage license data to OHSM via the internet instead of by floppy disks. The EMRS project is to follow the successful model of the EDR project, but with the staff at OHSM more experienced in developing and implementing electronic systems. This bodes well for the future EMRS.

Approximate Costs for the Reinvention Project			
Dates	Item	Funding	Cost
07/01/05-06/30/06	Reinvention Project Coordinator	Vital Statistics Improvement Special Fund (VSISF)	\$50,000
	EDR Project Manager	SSA Grant	\$50,000
	EDR Data Processing System Analyst	SSA Grant	\$50,000
	eHawaii EDR Programming	SSA Grant	\$50,000
			\$200,000 (TOTAL)
7/01/06-12/31/06	Reinvention Project Coordinator	VSISF	\$25,000
	EDR Project Manager	SSA Grant	\$25,000
	EDR Data Processing System Analyst	SSA Grant	\$25,000
	eHawaii EDR Programming	SSA Grant	\$250,000
			\$325,000 (TOTAL)
01/01/07-12/31/07	Reinvention Project Coordinator	VSISF	\$50,000
	EDR Project Manager	VSISF	\$50,000
	EDR Data Processing System Analyst	VSISF	\$50,000
	eHawaii EDR Programming	SSA Grant	\$50,000
			\$200,000 (TOTAL)
Estimated Cost to Create Electronic Marriage Registration System (EMRS)			
01/01/08-12/31/09	Reinvention Project Coordinator	VSISF	\$100,000
	EMRS Project Director	VSISF	\$100,000
	EMRS Data Processing System Analyst	VSISF	\$100,000
	eHawaii EMRS Programming	VSISF	\$300,000
			\$600,000 (TOTAL)