

HEALTH & SAFETY CODE
TITLE 3. VITAL STATISTICS
CHAPTER 191. ADMINISTRATION OF VITAL STATISTICS RECORDS
SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 191.001. DEFINITIONS. In this title:

- (1) "Board" means the Texas Board of Health.
 - (2) "Department" means the Texas Department of Health.
- Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.002. POWERS AND DUTIES OF DEPARTMENT. (a) The department shall administer the registration of vital statistics.

- (b) The department shall:
- (1) establish a bureau of vital statistics with suitable offices that are properly equipped for the preservation of its official records;
 - (2) establish a statewide system of vital statistics;
 - (3) provide instructions and prescribe forms for collecting, recording, transcribing, compiling, and preserving vital statistics;
 - (4) require the enforcement of this title and rules adopted under this title;
 - (5) prepare, print, and supply to local registrars forms for registering, recording, and preserving returns or otherwise carrying out the purposes of this title; and
 - (6) propose legislation necessary for the purposes of this title.

(c) The department may use birth records and provide those records on request to other state agencies for programs notifying mothers of young children about children's health needs.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.003. POWERS AND DUTIES OF BOARD. (a) The board shall:

- (1) adopt necessary rules for collecting, recording, transcribing, compiling, and preserving vital statistics;
- (2) supervise the bureau of vital statistics; and
- (3) appoint the director of the bureau of vital statistics.

(b) In an emergency, the board may suspend any part of this title that hinders the uniform and efficient registration of vital events and may substitute emergency rules designed to expedite that registration under disaster conditions.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.004. STATE REGISTRAR. (a) The director of the bureau of vital statistics is the state registrar of vital statistics. The director must be a competent vital statistician.

(b) The state registrar shall prepare and issue detailed instructions necessary for the uniform observance of this title and the maintenance of a perfect system of registration.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.0045. FEES. (a) The bureau of vital statistics may charge fees for providing services to the public and performing other activities in connection with maintenance of the vital statistics system, including:

- (1) performing searches of birth, death, fetal death, marriage, divorce, annulment, and other records;
- (2) preparing and issuing copies and certified copies of birth, death, fetal death, marriage, divorce, annulment, and other records; and
- (3) filing a record, amendment, or affidavit under this title.

(b) The board by rule may prescribe a schedule of fees for vital statistics services. The aggregate of the amounts of the fees may not exceed the cost of administering the vital statistics system.

(c) The bureau of vital statistics shall refund to an applicant any fee received for services that the bureau cannot perform. If the money has been deposited to the credit of the vital statistics fund, the comptroller shall issue a warrant against the fund for refund of the payment on presentation of a claim signed by the state registrar.

(d) A local registrar or county clerk who issues a certified copy of a birth or death certificate shall charge the same fees as charged by the bureau of vital statistics, including the additional fee required under Subsection (e), except as provided by Subsections (g) and (h).

(e) In addition to fees collected by the bureau of vital

statistics under Subsection (b), the bureau shall collect an additional \$2 fee for each of the following:

- (1) issuing a certified copy of a certificate of birth;
- (2) issuing a wallet-sized certification of birth;
- and
- (3) conducting a search for a certificate of birth.

(f) Repealed by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., ch. 263, Sec. 5(1).

(g) A local registrar or county clerk that on March 31, 1995, was charging a fee for the issuance of a certified copy of a birth certificate that exceeded the fee charged by the bureau of vital statistics for the same type of certificate may continue to do so but shall not raise this fee until the fee charged by the bureau exceeds the fee charged by the local registrar or county clerk. A local registrar or county clerk to which this subsection applies shall charge the additional fee as required under Subsection (e).

(h) In addition to other fees collected under this section, a local registrar or county clerk may collect a fee not to exceed \$1 for the preservation of vital statistics records maintained by the registrar or county clerk, including birth, death, fetal death, marriage, divorce, and annulment records. A fee under this section shall be collected by the registrar or county clerk on the issuance of a vital statistics record, including a record issued through a Remote Birth Access site.

Added by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., ch. 14, Sec. 52, eff. Sept. 1, 1991. Amended by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., ch. 651, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1991; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 9.62, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 305, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 975, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2005, 79th Leg., ch. 263, Sec. 5(1), eff. May 30, 2005; Acts 2005, 79th Leg., ch. 400, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2005.

Sec. 191.0046. FEE EXEMPTIONS. (a) On the request of a child's parent or guardian, the state registrar shall issue without fee a certificate necessary for admission to school or to secure employment. The certificate shall be limited to a statement of the child's date of birth.

(b) The state registrar shall issue without fee a certified copy of a record not otherwise prohibited by law to a veteran or to the veteran's widow, orphan, or other dependent if the copy is for use in settling a claim against the government.

(c) On court order, the state registrar may issue without fee a certified copy of a birth record in cases related to child labor or the public schools.

(d) The state registrar on request shall issue without a fee a copy of a birth or death record that is not certified to a child fatality review team or the child fatality review team committee established under Subchapter F, Chapter 264, Family Code.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Renumbered from V.T.C.A., Health and Safety Code Sec. 191.054 and amended by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., ch. 14, Sec. 52, eff. Sept. 1, 1991. Amended by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., ch. 11, Sec. 1, eff. May 3, 2005.

Sec. 191.005. VITAL STATISTICS FUND. (a) The vital statistics fund is in the state treasury.

(b) The legislature shall make appropriations to the department from the fund to be used to defray expenses incurred in the administration and enforcement of the system of vital statistics.

(c) All fees collected by the bureau of vital statistics shall be deposited to the credit of the vital statistics fund.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., ch. 14, Sec. 53, eff. Sept. 1, 1991.

Sec. 191.006. RECORDS OF PERSONS IN HOSPITALS AND INSTITUTIONS. (a) This section applies to each public or private hospital, almshouse, or other institution to which persons are committed by process of law or voluntarily enter for treatment of disease or for confinement.

(b) When a person is admitted to the institution, the superintendent, manager, or other person in charge of the institution shall record, in the manner directed by the state registrar, the admitted person's personal and statistical data required by certificate forms under this title. If the person is admitted for the treatment of disease, the physician in charge shall specify for the record the nature of the disease and where, in the physician's opinion, the disease was contracted.

(c) The personal information required under Subsection (b) shall be obtained:

(1) from the person admitted to the institution, if practicable; or

(2) from the person's relatives or friends or from other persons acquainted with the facts, in as complete a manner as possible, if the information cannot be obtained from the person admitted to the institution.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.007. REGULATION BY CERTAIN MUNICIPALITIES. The governing body of a Type A general-law municipality may:

(1) regulate the registration of marriages; and

(2) direct the return and maintenance of bills of mortality.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.008. SORTING COLLECTED DATA. (a) The department shall compile the information relating to births, deaths, and fetal deaths collected under this chapter and organize the results, to the extent possible, according to the following geographic areas:

(1) the Texas-Mexico border region;

(2) each public health region;

(3) rural areas;

(4) urban areas;

(5) each county; and

(6) the state.

(b) The department may release the information relating to births, deaths, and fetal deaths in accordance with the way it is compiled under this section.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., ch. 1034, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 2005.

SUBCHAPTER B. RECORDS OF BIRTHS, DEATHS, AND FETAL DEATHS

Sec. 191.021. REGISTRATION DISTRICTS. (a) The state is divided into registration districts for the purposes of registering births, deaths, and fetal deaths. The registration districts are:

(1) each justice of the peace precinct; and

(2) each municipality with a population of 2,500 or more.

(b) To facilitate registration, the board may combine or divide registration districts.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.022. LOCAL REGISTRARS. (a) The justice of the peace is the local registrar of births and deaths in a justice of the peace precinct. However, the duty of registering births and deaths may be transferred to the county clerk if the justice of the peace and the county clerk agree in writing and the agreement is ratified by the commissioners court.

(b) The municipal clerk or secretary is the local registrar of births and deaths in a municipality with a population of 2,500 or more.

(c) Each local registrar shall appoint a deputy registrar so that a registrar will be available at all times for the registration of births and deaths.

(d) The local registrar shall sign each report made to the bureau of vital statistics.

(e) If a local registrar fails or refuses to register each birth and death in the district or neglects duties under this title, the county judge or the mayor, as appropriate, shall appoint a new local registrar and shall send the name and mailing address of the appointee to the state registrar.

(f) A local registrar who collects a fee for a certified copy of a birth certificate shall deduct 20 cents of that fee to apply to the registrar's administrative costs and remit \$1.80 of that fee to the comptroller.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 305, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 2005, 79th Leg., ch. 263, Sec. 1, eff. May 30, 2005.

Sec. 191.023. CONSOLIDATION OF COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL MAINTENANCE OF BIRTH AND DEATH RECORDS. (a) The duties imposed by law relating to the maintenance of birth and death records of a municipality with a population of 2,500 or more may be transferred to the county in which the municipality is located, as provided by this section.

(b) If the commissioners court adopts a resolution to transfer the duties and the governing body of the municipality subsequently adopts a concurring resolution, the county and municipality shall agree on a timetable for the transfer and shall

execute the transfer in an orderly fashion.

(c) Before a commissioners court may adopt a resolution under Subsection (b), the official to whom the duties would be transferred must attest in writing that the official has sufficient resources and finances to assume those duties.

(d) If the governing body of a municipality does not adopt a concurring resolution before the 91st day after the date on which a county adopts a resolution under Subsection (b), a petition by the qualified voters of the municipality may serve as the equivalent of a concurring resolution under Subsection (b). The petition must succinctly describe the intention to consolidate county and municipal maintenance of birth and death records and must be signed by a number of qualified voters equal to at least 20 percent of the number of qualified voters voting in the most recent mayoral election.

(e) A consolidation under this section affects only the county and the municipality to which the resolutions apply. This section does not affect the apportionment of registration districts under Section 191.021.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.024. REPORTS OF INFORMATION. (a) On the state registrar's demand, a person, including a physician, midwife, or funeral director, who has information relating to a birth, death, or fetal death shall supply the information in person, by mail, or through the local registrar. The person shall supply the information on a form provided by the department or on the original certificate.

(b) An organization or individual who has a record of births or deaths that may be useful to establish the genealogy of a resident of this state may file the record or a duly authenticated transcript of the record with the state registrar.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.025. RECORD BOOKS AND CERTIFICATES. (a) Forms for the registration of births, deaths, and fetal deaths must be approved by the department.

(b) A municipality shall supply its local registrar, and each county shall supply the county clerk, with permanent record books for recording the births, deaths, and fetal deaths occurring in their respective jurisdictions. The record books must be in forms approved by the state registrar.

(c) A local registrar shall supply forms of certificates to persons who need them. The board shall establish and promulgate rules for strict accountability of birth certificates to prevent birth certificate fraud.

(d) Information required on a certificate must be written legibly in durable blue or black ink or may be filed and registered by photographic, electronic, or other means as prescribed by the state registrar.

(e) A certificate must contain each item of information required on the certificate or a satisfactory reason for omitting the item.

(f) The department shall require that the form for the registration of deaths must include the question, "Was the decedent a peace officer or an honorably retired peace officer in this state?"

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., 1st C.S., ch. 15, Sec. 5.14, eff. Sept. 1, 1991; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 17, Sec. 1, eff. April 25, 1997; Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 476, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 2001; Acts 2005, 79th Leg., ch. 744, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 2005.

Sec. 191.026. LOCAL RECORDS. (a) The local registrar shall secure a complete record of each birth, death, and fetal death that occurs in the local registrar's jurisdiction.

(b) The local registrar shall consecutively number birth and death certificates in separate series, beginning with the number "1" for the first birth and the first death in each calendar year. The local registrar shall sign each certificate to attest to the date the certificate is filed in the local registrar's office.

(c) The local registrar shall copy in the record book required under Section 191.025 each certificate that the local registrar registers, unless the local registrar keeps duplicates under Subsection (d) or makes photographic duplications as authorized by Chapter 181 or 201, Local Government Code. Except as provided by Subsection (e), the copies shall be permanently preserved in the local registrar's office as the local record, in

the manner directed by the state registrar.

(d) The local registrar may permanently bind duplicate reports of births and deaths, if the duplicates are required by local ordinance, and index them in the manner that the state registrar indexes records under Section 191.032.

(e) The local registrar may, after the first anniversary of the date of registration of a birth, death, or fetal death, destroy the permanent record of the birth, death, or fetal death maintained by the local registrar if:

(1) the local registrar has access to electronic records of births, deaths, and fetal deaths maintained by the bureau of vital statistics; and

(2) before destroying the records, the local registrar certifies to the state registrar that each record maintained by the local office that is to be destroyed has been verified against the records contained in the bureau's database and that each record is included in the database or otherwise accounted for.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1997, 74th Leg., ch. 17, Sec. 2, eff. April 25, 1997.

Sec. 191.027. REVIEW OF CERTIFICATE BY LOCAL REGISTRAR. (a) The local registrar shall carefully examine each birth or death certificate when presented for registration to determine if it is completed as required by this title and by the state registrar's instructions.

(b) If a death certificate is incomplete or unsatisfactory, the local registrar shall call attention to the defects in the return.

(c) If a birth certificate is incomplete, the local registrar shall immediately notify the informant and require the informant to supply the missing information if it can be obtained.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.028. AMENDMENT OF CERTIFICATE. (a) A record of a birth, death, or fetal death accepted by a local registrar for registration may not be changed except as provided by Subsection (b).

(b) An amending certificate may be filed to complete or correct a record that is incomplete or proved by satisfactory evidence to be inaccurate. The amendment must be in a form prescribed by the department. The amendment shall be attached to and become a part of the legal record of the birth, death, or fetal death if the amendment is accepted for filing, except as provided by Section 192.011(b).

(c) Repealed by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., ch. 14, Sec. 54, eff. Sept. 1, 1991.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., ch. 14, Sec. 54, eff. Sept. 1, 1991.

Sec. 191.029. CERTIFICATES OR REPORT SENT TO STATE REGISTRAR. On the 10th day of each month, the local registrar shall send to the state registrar:

(1) the original certificates that the local registrar registered during the preceding month; or

(2) a report of no births or deaths on a card provided for that purpose if no births or deaths occurred during the preceding month.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.030. RECORDS FILED WITH COUNTY. (a) Not later than the 10th day of each month, the local registrar shall file with the commissioners court or the county auditor, as appropriate, a copy of each birth, death, and fetal death certificate filed with the local registrar during the preceding month.

(b) Each copy must show the local registrar's file date and signature.

(c) The copies shall be deposited in the county clerk's office.

(d) This subsection does not apply in a municipality that has an ordinance requiring that a copy of each birth, death, and fetal death certificate be permanently filed in the office of the municipality's registrar.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.031. REVIEW OF CERTIFICATES BY STATE REGISTRAR. (a) The state registrar shall carefully examine the certificates received monthly from the local registrars.

(b) The state registrar shall require additional information to make the record complete and satisfactory if necessary.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.032. STATE RECORDS. (a) The state registrar shall arrange, bind, and permanently preserve birth, death, and fetal death certificates in a systematic manner.

(b) The board shall adopt rules necessary to implement this section.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., ch. 260, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1991.

Sec. 191.033. ADDENDA. (a) The state registrar may attach to the original record an addendum that sets out any information received by the state registrar that may contradict the information in a birth, death, or fetal death record required to be maintained in the bureau of vital statistics.

(b) If the state registrar attaches an addendum to an original record, the state registrar shall instruct the local registration official in whose jurisdiction the birth, death, or fetal death occurred to attach an identical addendum to any duplicate of the record in the official's custody.

(c) In this section, "local registration official" means a county clerk or a person authorized by this title to maintain a duplicate system of records for each birth, death, or fetal death that occurs in the person's jurisdiction.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.034. NOTATION OF DEATH ON BIRTH CERTIFICATE. (a) On receipt of the death certificate of a person younger than 55 years of age whose birth is registered in this state, the state registrar shall make a conspicuous notation on the decedent's birth certificate that the person is dead.

(b) The state registrar shall provide computer-generated abstracts, transcripts, or copies of the death certificate to the county clerk of the county in which the decedent was born and to the local registrar of the registration district in which the decedent was born. On receipt of the notification of death, the county clerk or local registrar shall make a conspicuous notation on the decedent's birth certificate that the person is dead.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., ch. 260, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1991.

Sec. 191.036. SPANISH SURNAME INFORMATION. (a) The purpose of this section is to:

(1) enable this state to participate in a study being conducted by a group of southwestern states to obtain information about the birth rates and mortality patterns of persons with Spanish surnames; and

(2) implement recommendations made by the National Center for Health Statistics for improved methods of maintaining vital statistics.

(b) In the next official revision of the prescribed forms for birth and fetal death certificates, the department shall include the following questions and instructions:

(1) Is the father of Spanish origin?

(2) If yes, specify Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, etc.

(3) Is the mother of Spanish origin?

(4) If yes, specify Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, etc.

(c) In the next official revision of the prescribed forms for death certificates, the department shall include the following questions and instructions:

(1) Was the decedent of Spanish origin?

(2) If yes, specify Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, etc.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

SUBCHAPTER C. COPIES OF RECORDS

Sec. 191.051. CERTIFIED COPIES. (a) Subject to board rules controlling the accessibility of vital records, the state registrar shall supply to a properly qualified applicant, on request, a certified copy of a record, or part of a record, of a birth, death, or fetal death registered under this title.

(b) A certified copy issued under this subsection may be issued only in the form approved by the department.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.052. CERTIFIED COPY AS EVIDENCE. A copy of a birth, death, or fetal death record registered under this title that is certified by the state registrar is prima facie evidence of the facts stated in the record.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.056. COPIES COLLECTED BY NATIONAL AGENCY. (a) The national agency in charge of the collection of vital statistics may

obtain, without expense to the state, transcripts of vital records without payment of the fees prescribed by this chapter.

(b) The bureau of vital statistics may contract with the national agency to have copies of vital records that are filed with the bureau transcribed for that agency.

(c) The state registrar may act as special agent for the national agency to accept the use of the franking privilege and forms furnished by the national agency.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 191.057. RECORDS WITH ADDENDA. (a) In this section:

(1) "Copy" means a reproduction of a record made by any means.

(2) "Local registration official" means a county clerk or a person authorized by this title to maintain a duplicate system of records for each birth, death, or fetal death that occurs in the person's jurisdiction.

(b) If the bureau of vital statistics or any local registration official receives an application for a certified copy of a birth, death, or fetal death record to which an addendum has been attached under Section 191.033, the application shall be sent immediately to the state registrar. After examining the application, the original record, and the addendum, the state registrar may refuse to issue a certified copy of the record or part of the record to the applicant.

(c) If the state registrar refuses to issue the certified copy:

(1) the state registrar shall notify the applicant of the refusal and the reason for the refusal not later than the 10th day after the date on which the state registrar receives the application; and

(2) the department shall give the applicant an opportunity for a hearing.

(d) After the hearing, the state registrar shall notify the local officials who have duplicates of the questioned record of the department's final decision. The department may order the officials to issue or refuse to issue certified copies of the record.

(e) A duty imposed on or a power granted to the state registrar under this section may be performed or exercised by a designee of the state registrar.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.