

THE *Vital* CONNECTION

Connecting Vital Records Partners Across Georgia

February/March 2015



Did You Know?

Birth and death records contain more than just your legal name and the date of your birth. These records also include valuable health information used to plan and evaluate public health programs and measure the health of our populace. When you hear about the latest teen pregnancy rates, or read about the number of cancer and heart disease deaths in your community, vital records are the source.

The information collected from birth and death records is de-identified to protect privacy. It is then aggregated at the state and national levels to produce statistics that become the foundation for program planning, surveillance and research in areas such as maternal and child health, pandemic disease control, health disparity reduction, and the identification of emerging health concerns.

Source: <http://www.naphsis.org/About-NAPHSIS>



Legal Residence Of Decedent

When determining the "legal" residence of the decedent, remember that it is not where the person has been living temporarily in an institution or care facility. The rule of thumb is "legal" residence as supported by tax records, drivers' license address, car registration, voter registration, etc.



Disclosure Of Records

Upon receipt of a written application, certified copies of vital records may be issued to applicants having a direct and tangible interest, primarily family members or legal representatives of the family. Certified copies of vital records may be obtained from the state vital records office, or the county where the vital event occurred.

Per our current Georgia Code, certified and non-certified copies, **without the cause of death** are available to any applicant upon proper application. **Ga. Code Ann., §31-10-26. Copies and Data from Vital Records Registration System Ga Comp. R. & Regs. 511-1-3-33**

Adoption Records

Evidentiary documents that are used to create new adoption records are not stored in GAVERS; however, the documents are sealed at the State Office of Vital Records. GAVERS stores the old and new birth certificates as an electronic trail vs. a paper trail. Once the new record is created, accessing or opening the sealed file is not allowed without a court order. In other words, the new certificate overrides the original and the original is sealed.

dph.georgia.gov/VitalRecords

Generational Titles

In the state of Georgia, there are no legal issues with parents adding "Jr." to a child's name even if the father's name is not exactly the same as the child's name. While there are specific legal restrictions on the surname, the "Jr." designation is similar to the middle name in that the parents are free to decide.

Paternity Acknowledgment Surname Change

A paternity acknowledgement is a vehicle to change the last name or surname of a child on a birth certificate as agreed upon by the mother and father. It does not allow for the change of the first and middle name. In order to change the entire name, or either the first or middle name or both, a court order would be required.

Ga. Code Ann., § 31-10-9. Birth Registration

Georgia Putative Father Registry

The Georgia Putative Father Registry is a list of the names of men who have (1) acknowledged paternity of a child by completing the Paternity Acknowledgment form or (2) indicated the **possibility** of paternity without acknowledging paternity of the child.

The Registry allows possible biological, but not legal fathers to provide identifying information about themselves, the mother, and the child, so registered men can be notified about adoption proceedings and proceedings to terminate their rights.

A man can use the "Putative Father Registry Registration Form" (No. 3960) which can be obtained in a county Vital Records registrar's office, county Health Department, county Probate Judge's office, or the State Office of Vital Records. The registration form and additional information can be found on the DPH website at: <http://dph.georgia.gov/putative-father-registry>

Funeral Home Best Practice

Williams Funeral Home, in Milledgeville, does about 300 death registrations a year. The business enjoys a best practice for securing medical information (from entities who are not yet GAVERS users). By requesting the medical portion of the registration document with the hospitalist's signature at the time of removal of the decedent from the hospital, the funeral home does not have to "chase down a hospitalist". According to Cameron Williams, "90% of my issues with the death registration process is getting the medical doctor to complete their portion. With this best practice, I'm resolving these issues before they become issues."

The GAVERS Marriage Module Is Here!

Beginning in February, the State Office of Vital Records launched the GAVERS Marriage Module. This module will be used primarily by Probate Court judges and their clerks and will allow registration of Georgia marriage events, statewide search capability, reporting capability, statewide uniform marriage license certificates, statewide standardization of fees, and will provide the ability to make general corrections. Training is being rolled out, and all county probate judges and staff will be trained by the end of April.

GAVERS Testimonials

GAVERS was a challenge to me personally as a small funeral home owner with a part-time staff. I was slow to implement the GAVERS online process, but it has proven to be very beneficial to my business and to my customers in expediting death certificates and life insurance matters. We can have a death certificate dropped to paper, faxed to the doctor, and returned before visitation is held. The quickest return I've had on a death certificate was less than 30 minutes. GAVERS still has its quirks but I'm confident Vital Records will work them out. The GAVERS system is a good one, it is good for business, good for families, and should be implemented across Georgia.



– Tommy Davis, Owner & Director
J.C. Harwell and Son Funeral Home
Covington, Newton County

I recommend the use of the GAVERS. It has tremendous abilities and saves us a lot of time running around the city dropping off death certificates at doctor's offices. This system has helped us serve our customers faster with fewer errors. We have been on the system eight months and found it very user friendly. We would like to see more doctors accept the online system.

– Eddie Lummus
Winkenhofer Pine Ridge
Kennesaw Memorial Park
Funeral Home & Cemetery Service



For more information, visit:
dph.georgia.gov/VitalRecords

Birth Record Ratings: The Top 10 Facilities

Congratulations to the following medical facilities whose ratings for timeliness and completeness have placed them in the top 10 in the state of Georgia for the months of January and February.

January

Rank		Avg. Days to Register a Birth
1.	Grady General Hospital	1.9
2.	Wellstar Douglas Hospital	2.2
3.	South Georgia Medical Center	2.6
4.	Irwin County Hospital	2.7
5.	Tanner Medical Center Villa Rica	3.3
6.	Houston Medical Center	2.2
7.	Mayo Clinic Health Systems In Waycross	1.4
8.	Wayne Memorial Hospital	1.5
9.	West Georgia Health System	3
10.	Donalsonville Hospital	3.1

February

Rank		Avg. Days to Register a Birth
1.	Candler Hospital	2.8
2.	South Georgia Medical Center	2.5
3.	Houston Medical Center	2.2
4.	St Francis Hospital	2.6
5.	Mayo Clinic Health Systems In Waycross	1.3
6.	Tanner Medical Center Villa Rica	3.1
7.	Irwin County Hospital	2.4
8.	Grady General Hospital	2
9.	Tift Regional Medical Center	2.6
10.	West Georgia Health System	2.9



Vital Records Fee Structure

Search Fee (includes one certified copy, if record is found on file)	\$25
Additional certifications of same record ordered at the same time	\$5
Multi-year search (every three years or portion thereof)	\$25
Verifications without printed copy	

SPECIAL FILING FEE

In addition to the \$25 search fee, the following fees must be included based on the transaction:

• Delayed certificate of birth	\$10
• Amending birth certificate because of adoption, Paternity Acknowledgment, legitimation or court order	\$10

METHODS OF PAYMENT

- Cash - Walk-ins Only
- Certified Check
- Money Order
- Visa
- Master Card

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

NOTIFY US OF STAFF CHANGES

When an employee is leaving your facility, you must notify the State Registrar, Donna Moore or Deputy Director Cynthia Buskey-Martin, to close the employee's GAVERS account. GAVERS is a web-based system; therefore, the former employee could still access your confidential records until we are notified to deactivate their account.

New employees needing GAVERS access must complete the User Registration and Confidentiality Agreement and return the completed forms to the State Office of Vital Records. Under Georgia law, you are to protect the confidentiality of your password. Sharing of logins and passwords is strictly prohibited.

PRINTING CAPABILITIES

County registrars, you have the capability to print delayed birth certificates. It is no longer necessary to contact the State office to ask that we print or fax copies to you. Simply follow these steps: Record> Print> Delayed Certificate of Birth> Certified/ Uncertified Copy