








Revisions of the U.S. Standard Certificates and Reports

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) has been collaborating with colleagues in state vital statistics offices to revise the certificates of live birth and death and the report of fetal death. This process is generally carried out every 10 to 15 years. Prior to 2003, the most recent revisions in effect were implemented in 1989. The 2003 revisions have recently been approved by the Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary (see: [HHS Secretary's notice of approval](#)  [PDF - 59 KB]) and have started going into effect in states. Some states began the revision process in 2003, but full implementation in all states will be phased in over several years. A critical component of the recommendations for this revision focuses on fundamental changes in the way that data are collected, especially for births. Partly as a result of these recommendations, states have engaged in re-engineering their vital statistics systems as they implement the revisions.

The complex process involved in revising the content of the standard certificates and reports is described in the Executive Summary of the [Report of the Panel to Evaluate the U.S. Standard Certificates and Reports](#)  [PDF - 2 MB]. Many of the documents on this page have been updated to incorporate changes made during the clearance and approval processes in detail.

2003 Revisions of the U.S. Standard Certificates and Reports


























- [Live Birth](#)  [PDF - 30 KB] (Rev. 11/2003)
- [Death](#)  [PDF - 74 KB] (Rev. 11/2003)
- [Fetal Death](#)  [PDF - 28 KB] (Rev. 11/2003)

Specifications for Collecting and Editing the U.S. Standard Certificates and Reports

The specifications for collecting and editing the U.S. standard certificates of live birth and death and the Report of Fetal Death (2003 revisions) have now been updated to reflect the changes made during the HHS clearance process as well as changes recommended by the Data Analysis Committee.

As part of the revision process, NCHS has developed sets of detailed specifications for collecting and reporting the items on the birth and death certificates and fetal death report. It is critical that all registration areas follow these standards as closely as possible to promote uniformity in data collection across registration areas. Included with the draft specifications is an overview. The overview gives the rationale behind the approaches taken to develop the specifications.















File layouts that are consistent with the final approved certificates and the code lists for race and Hispanic origin are also available.

- [Specifications for Collecting and Editing the United States Standard Certificates of Birth and Death \(2003 Revisions\)](#)  [PDF - 211 KB]
- [Specifications for Items on the Death Certificate](#)  [PDF - 1.6 MB] (Rev. 2/2005)
NOTE: The specifications now include the changes resulting from the HHS clearance process and the changes recommended by the Data Analysis Committee. For information on specific changes to the specifications, please contact dhoyert@cdc.gov or jamartin@cdc.gov.
 - [List of Modified Items Death](#)  [PDF - 14 KB] (3/2005)
 - [Updates to Death Specifications](#)  [PDF - 13 KB]
- [Specifications for the Items on the Birth Certificate](#)  [PDF - 654 KB] (Rev. 7/2012)
UPDATE: The source for Item 8b "DATE OF BIRTH (MOTHER)" has been clarified: "The mother is defined as the woman who gave birth to, or delivered the infant." (7/2012).
NOTE: The specifications now include the changes resulting from the HHS clearance process and the changes recommended by the Data Analysis Committee. For information on specific changes to the specifications, please contact jamartin@cdc.gov or dhoyert@cdc.gov.
- [Specifications for the Items on the Fetal Death Report](#)  [PDF - 620 KB] (Rev. 7/2012)
UPDATE: The source for Item 10b "DATE OF BIRTH (MOTHER)" has been clarified: "The mother/patient is defined as the woman who gave birth to, or delivered the infant." (7/2012).
NOTE: The specifications now include the changes resulting from the HHS clearance process and the changes recommended by the Data Analysis Committee. For information on specific changes to the specifications, please contact jamartin@cdc.gov or dhoyert@cdc.gov.
- File layouts
 - Birth  [PDF - 672 KB] (Rev. 1/2004)  [XLS - 71 KB] (Rev. 1/2004)
 - Fetal Death  [PDF - 394 KB] (Rev. 1/2004)  [XLS - 57 KB] (Rev. 1/2004)
 - Death (demographic)  [PDF - 443 KB] (Rev. 1/2004)  [XLS - 35 KB] (Rev. 1/2004)
 - Death (medical)
 - Super MICAR  [PDF - 171 KB]  [XLS - 87 KB]
 - MICAR 100  [PDF - 115 KB]
 - MICAR 200  [PDF - 161 KB]
 - TRANSAX Input  [PDF - 145 KB]
 - TRANSAX Output  [PDF - 151 KB]
 - ACME  [PDF - 139 KB]
 - Code Lists
 - Hispanic Origin  [PDF - 28 KB]  [XLS - 24KB] (Rev 4/2011)
 - Race  [PDF - 214 KB]  [XLS - 290 KB] (Rev 4/2011)
 - HL7/CDC Race and Ethnicity Code Set  [PDF - 86 KB] (8/2009)
- Medical data file information
 - [Image of New SuperMICAR Screen](#)  [PDF - 17 KB]


- [Changes in Medical Data File](#)  [PDF – 66 KB]
- [Deletion of Data Items from the Birth and Fetal Death National Files](#)

Worksheets

NCHS is strongly promoting the use of standard worksheets to enhance the collection of quality, reliable data. We have also developed [handbooks and guides for data collection](#) from the facility worksheets for the birth certificate and the fetal death report.

- Worksheets for the birth certificate
 - Mother's  [PDF – 309 KB] (Rev. 12/2016)  [DOC – 37 KB]
 - Mother's (Spanish version)  [PDF – 164 KB] (Rev. 1/2004)  [DOC – 73 KB]
 - Facility  [PDF – 272 KB] (Rev. 12/2016)  [DOC – 85 KB]
 - Facility – for Multiple Births  [PDF – 277 KB] (Rev. 12/2016)  [DOC – 65 KB]
- Worksheets for the fetal death report
 - Patient's  [PDF – 100 KB] (Rev. 8/2019)  [DOC – 57 KB]
 - Patient's (Spanish version)  [PDF – 135 KB] (Rev. 1/2004)  [DOC – 115 KB]
 - Facility  [PDF – 144 KB] (Rev. 8/2019)  [DOC – 71 KB]

Presentations

The Division of Vital Statistics has developed a poster presentation, [The New Birth Certificate: Making Vital Statistics More Vital](#)  [PPT – 5 MB]. The poster summarizes the revision process, including a description of the panel membership and composition, and the panel's recommendations. The panel's recommendation of standardized worksheets for collecting the data and the development of detailed specifications for electronic systems are described in the poster. Information on the modified and new item recommendations for the certificate is also presented.

A companion poster presentation, [Making Vital Statistics More Vital Supplement: The New Death Certificate](#)  [PPT – 615 KB] is also available.

Recent presentations by NCHS staff on “Geographic Coding” and “New Methodologies for Data Transmission to NCHS” are also available on this site.

Letters

A number of communications have been transmitted by the Division of Vital Statistics to state registration colleagues since late 2000 concerning the implementation of the revised certificates. See: [Letters from the Division of Vital Statistics \(DVS\) to States](#).

