VITAL RECORDS:
WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO
What are Vital Records?

- Permanent government issued legal records that document life events
  - Births
  - Deaths
  - Fetal deaths
  - Marriages
  - Divorces
Responsibility for Vital Records

- In the United States, the legal authority to register birth and deaths lies at the state level within 57 jurisdictions (50 states, 2 cities, and 5 territories).
- The 57 jurisdictions share death record information with the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- The compiled national natality and mortality statistics inform a variety of medical and health-related research efforts.
History of Vital Records

- **Colonial Days**: Legal documents were used to protect individual property rights.
- **18th-19th century**: Records were used to track cholera, yellow fever, and typhoid epidemics.
- **In 1833** only Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New Orleans required birth and death reports.
- **Late 1800’s**: Records functioned as an ability to measure progress in public health.
- **1910**: Statewide registration began in Missouri.
- **1950-present**: Growing public health and research needed.
Major Uses of Vital Records

- Public health statistics and research
- Legal and administrative
Public Health and Research Uses

- Community Health Assessments
- Infant mortality disparities
- Effectiveness of Safe Cribs program
- Epidemiologic study on one million U.S. radiation workers
- Life expectancy by demographic factors
Other Public Health and Research Uses of Missouri Mortality Data

- Partner with Missouri Department of Labor on identifying fatal occupational injuries to improve worker safety
- Surveillance of pneumonia and influenza mortality, communicable and infectious disease mortality, and weather-related deaths, among others
- Emerging issues such as hospital associated infections and drug overdose deaths
Legal and Administrative Purposes

- Obtain identity documents (passport, DL)
- Enroll in benefits programs
- Settle estates & obtain life insurance payouts
- Terminate benefits (social security, pension)
- Remove names from voter rolls and jury pools
How Are Vital Records Processed?

- The **Missouri Electronic Vital Records** (MoEVR) system, operated by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services – Bureau of Vital Records, exists to support the electronic registration of vital records, such as birth and death certificates, in Missouri.

- **Births** in Missouri usually involve a hospital and are entered into MoEVR by a birth certificate clerk.

- **Deaths** in Missouri usually involve a funeral director, medical certifier, and usually an embalmer.
Birth Registration Data Flow

- Birth occurs
- Hospital reports to BVR (Bureau of Vital Records)
- BVR reviews data for quality
  - *If needed, BVR follows up with hospital*
- BVR shares data with mother’s state of residence
- BVR submits birth data to CDC/NCHS
- CDC/NCHS reviews data for quality
  - *If needed, CDC/NCHS follows up with BVR*
  - *If needed, BVR follows up with hospital*
- BVR submits final complete year end data to CDC/NCHS
- CDC/NCHS conducts final data quality review
  - *If needed, CDC/NCHS follows up with BVR*
  - *If needed, BVR follows up with hospital*
- BVR/CDC/NCHS each release aggregate vital statistics data
Death Registration Data Flow

- Funeral Home
  - reports decedent’s demographic data
- Attending physician, PA, AP or APR
  - certifies natural causes of death
- Medical examiner/coroner
  - certifies and reports external causes and unknown manner or unattended death
- All information is then transmitted to the Bureau of Vital Records for registration
- BVR shares data with decedent’s state of residence
- BVR submits death data to CDC/NCHS
- CDC/NCHS reviews data for quality
  - If needed, CDC/NCHS follows up with BVR
  - If needed, BVR follows up with funeral home and/or medical certifier
- BVR submits final complete year end data to CDC/NCHS
- CDC/NCHS conducts final data quality review
  - If needed, CDC/NCHS follows up with BVR
  - If needed, BVR follows up with funeral home and/or medical certifier
- BVR/CDC/NCHS each release aggregate vital statistics data
Federal and State Partners

- **National Center for Health Statistics at CDC**
  - Vital Statistics Cooperative Program
  - National Death Index

- **Social Security Administration**
  - Enumeration at Birth
  - Fact of Death

- **State Partners**
  - DSS, MoHealthNet Division
  - Office of State Courts Administrator
Vital Records Going Forward

- Enhance data quality
  - Feedback to data sources
  - Training of data providers

- Improve timeliness
  - Reduce paper certificates
  - Increased physician adoption of MoEVR

- Enhance performance
  - Build on the features in the electronic system
  - Look to future needs that need to be incorporated
Contact Vital Records

Bureau of Vital Records
Division of Community and Public Health
Department of Health and Senior Services
930 Wildwood Drive
Jefferson City, Missouri 65109

Phone (573) 751-6387, Fax (573) 526-3846
www.health.mo.gov/vitalrecords

Revised: June 2020