

Vital Records; acquiring death certificates by a funeral home/funeral director

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The information below was provided by the Vital Records Assistant Registrar:

Below is the statute. Just as clarification, the SHALL part of the statute requires that Vital Records issues a certificate to the funeral director acting at the request of the surviving family. It does NOT require that the funeral director make such a request on behalf of the family, it only allows them to make such a request. -

LA R.S. 40:41 (C)(5) *The state registrar shall issue a certified copy of a death certificate to a funeral director acting at the request of the immediate or surviving family up to one year following the date of death. Thereafter, the provisions of R.S. 40:41(C)(1) and (2) shall apply.*

RS 40:41

§41. Disclosure of records

A. All certificates in the custody of the state registrar are open to inspection, subject to the provisions of this Chapter. No employee of the state shall disclose data contained in vital records, except as authorized by this Chapter.

B.(1) Disclosure of confidential birth information from which can be determined whether the child was born of or outside of marriage may be made only upon order of the court in any case where that information is necessary for the determination of personal or property rights and then only for that purpose. Upon receiving an order from the court, the vital records registrar shall file a copy of the birth certificate, marked for judicial purposes only, under seal in the records of the clerk of court. The judge presiding over the matter may review the birth certificate in chambers and may use the birth certificate within his discretion during the course of the proceedings. No copies of the birth certificate may be issued by the court to the litigants in the proceeding. The birth certificate must be destroyed at the conclusion of the proceedings after all appeal delays have lapsed. This Section shall not apply in any case where any sheriff, United States attorney, attorney general, or district attorney makes written request to the state registrar. Upon receipt of such written request, such registrar shall make disclosure to any sheriff, United States attorney, attorney general, or district attorney requesting same, of the contents of birth records in the registrar's custody.

(2) Disclosure of confidential death certificate information may be made only upon order of the court in any case where a judge orders that information is necessary for the resolution of the proceeding and then only for that purpose. Upon receiving an order from the court, the vital records registrar shall file a copy of the death certificate, marked for judicial purposes only, under seal in the records of the clerk of court. The judge presiding over the matter may review the death certificate in chambers and may use the death certificate within his discretion during the course of the proceedings. No copies of the death certificate may be issued by the court to the litigants in the proceeding. The death certificate must be destroyed at the conclusion of the proceedings after all appeal delays have lapsed. This Section shall not apply in any case where any sheriff, United States attorney, attorney general, public administrator, or district attorney makes a written request to the state registrar. Upon receipt of such written request, such registrar shall make

disclosure to any sheriff, United States attorney, attorney general, public administrator, or district attorney requesting same, of the contents of the death certificate in the registrar's custody.

C.(1) The state registrar shall not permit inspection of the records or issue a certificate, or any part thereof, unless he is satisfied that the applicant thereof is the person named in the certificate, or is a member of the immediate or surviving family of said person, or is named in a court proceeding as a member of the immediate or surviving family of said person, or is the beneficiary of an insurance policy or trust.

(2) The credentials of an attorney, together with a written declaration of the record in which he is interested and a written declaration or oral statement that he is a legal representative of one of the named parties referenced in Paragraph (C)(1) shall constitute sufficient proof of a direct interest in the matter recorded.

(3) The provisions of this Subsection shall not apply to marriage records.

(4) The provisions of this Subsection shall not apply to the release of birth rosters to local city and parish supervisors of child welfare and attendance; however, such birth information shall be kept confidential by the supervisors of child welfare and attendance and not used for any purpose other than the enforcement of the compulsory school attendance law.

(5) The state registrar shall issue a certified copy of a death certificate to a funeral director acting at the request of the immediate or surviving family up to one year following the date of death. Thereafter, the provisions of R.S. 40:41(C)(1) and (2) shall apply.

D.(1) In accordance with rules and regulations promulgated by the state health officer to ensure that all identifying information is kept confidential, the data contained in vital records may be made available to state judicial district courts to enable the courts to remove deceased persons from the juror rolls, to the department for use in the administration of the programs of the department, and to qualified researchers.

(2) A panel of public health officials which shall include the state health officer, the state registrar, and the tumor registry administrator shall review each proposal for use of vital records in the administration of the programs of the department or in research to ensure:

(a) That the proposal is in the best interest of the state or the public health of its citizens, and

(b) That those persons having access to vital records are either involved in the administration of the programs of the department or are well qualified to conduct research.

(3) Only those proposals which are certified by the panel as meeting these two standards shall be approved by the panel to use confidential vital records.

E. The registrar shall make available for inspection and copying and shall forward upon request copies of records of deaths to the Louisiana cancer registry program established pursuant to R.S. 40:1229.80 et seq.

F. The federal agency responsible for national vital statistics may be furnished such copies or data from the system of vital records as it may require for national statistics, provided such federal agency shares in the cost of collecting, processing, and transmitting such data, and provided further that such data shall not be used for other than statistical purposes by the federal agency unless so authorized by the state registrar.

G. The state registrar may, by agreement, transmit copies of records and other reports required by this Chapter to offices of vital statistics outside this state when such records or other reports relate to residents of those jurisdictions or persons born in those jurisdictions. The agreement shall require that the copies be used for statistical and administrative purposes only and the agreement shall further provide for the retention and disposition of such copies. Copies received by the vital records registry from offices of vital statistics in other states shall be handled in the same manner as prescribed in this Section.