

Vital Records for Infant and Fetal Deaths

INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR HOSPITAL AND FUNERAL HOME STAFF

A birth record is required for all live births

Register all live births of any gestational age, regardless of anticipated outcomes for the infants. A birth record is necessary for live births even when a baby is born too early for resuscitative efforts; with anomalies that are not compatible with life; or with a disease, condition, or injury that may result in death shortly after birth. These situations result in very short lifetimes – but they are lifetimes, and birth registration is required.

When a live-born baby dies before the birth record is registered:

- Register the birth as usual. Unmarried parents can establish paternity, and parents can give the child any name they choose.
- Social Security will not issue a card to a deceased person. It is best to say NO to the Social Security question on the birth record.
- Hospital staff should collect information about the family's funeral home selection.
 - Enter the name of the funeral home on the birth record
 - Be sure the funeral home is aware that the baby was born alive.
- Parents can purchase a birth certificate for their child.

A fetal death record is required for all fetal deaths at 20 or more weeks gestation

Although the words “stillbirth” “fetal death” and “miscarriage” seem interchangeable, fetal death is the preferred terminology for vital records. “Fetal death” has a legal definition. In Minnesota, fetal deaths must be registered when they occur at 20 weeks of gestation or later.

When a fetus dies before or during birth, hospital staff will register a fetal death record:

- The parent(s) can give the stillborn baby any name they choose.
- Both parents can be named on the record regardless of the parents' marital status. There is no need for unmarried parents to establish paternity.
- Hospital staff should collect information about the family's funeral home selection.

- Enter the funeral home and disposition (if known) on the fetal death record.
- Parents can purchase a *Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth* from the state Office of Vital Records.

Inform the funeral home that the baby was *not* born alive—that this is a fetal death.

Determination of “live birth” or “fetal death” is the birth attendant’s responsibility. Birth attendants should tell the birth registrar when a fetal death occurs. Because medical record data contains documentation of resuscitation efforts, use of this data alone can result in an inaccurate or incorrect vital record for the infant or fetus. See [Minnesota Rules 4601.0100](#) for the definitions of “fetal death” and “live birth.”

A death record is required when any living person dies

Funeral home staff collect information from an “informant” — usually a family member — and register a death record for bodies in their care.

When a funeral home takes custody of an infant or stillborn baby:

- Funeral staff need clear documentation from hospitals on whether the deceased was born alive or was a fetal death to properly adhere to registration and disposition regulations.
- Funeral home staff can contact the Office of Vital Records (OVR) at 651-201-5970 or health.vitalrecords@state.mn to verify the vital event if a birth record or fetal death record has already been registered.
- Once the death or fetal death is registered, the funeral home can proceed with disposition.
- Disposition permits for an infant who was born alive are printed from MR&C. The [Fetal Death Disposition Permit](#) is available on the MDH website.

In rare situations when a family has not selected a funeral home for a live-born infant who dies, hospital staff must contact OVR at 651-201-5970 or health.vitalrecords@state.mn.us to register a death record and obtain a disposition permit.

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health.vitalrecords@state.mn.us
www.health.state.mn.us

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5970.