BACKGROUND

The National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) provides essential data on U.S. births and deaths.

- Over six million vital events are reported annually.
- The information collected includes a wide range of demographic, medical, and geographic data derived from over 4 million birth certificates and from about 2.5 million death certificates and fetal death reports.
- These events are registered by 57 registration areas: 50 states, 2 cities, and 5 U.S. territories.
- Detailed data on vital events are transmitted to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) for processing and dissemination.
- Much of the information collected for birth and death certificates and fetal death reports are captured in hospital medical records.
- The vital statistics and standards communities have collaborated to build upon more than a century’s effort in standardization to encourage electronic medical and health information in a format consistent with the vital statistics requirements.

The goal is to improve the timeliness, accuracy, and completeness of vital records (VR) data. The benefits of this approach have yet to be demonstrated. That is:

- Will the quality and timeliness of vital records data improve?
- Will the data collection become more or less standardized?
- Will there be a reduction in the redundancy of data entry and lower costs for both hospitals and states?

While research continues, the vital records community recognizes the potential of integration of EHRs with electronic vital records systems, and has collaborated to lay a solid foundation for standardized transmission of vital records information from EHRs to electronic vital records systems.

VITAL RECORDS REFERENCES

- U.S. Standard Certificate of Live Birth—2009 revision
- U.S. Standard Certificate of Death—2009 revision
- U.S. Standard Report of Fetal Death—2009 revision
- Birth-Edit Specifications for the 2003 Revision of the U.S. Standard Certificate of Birth
- Death-Edit Specifications for the 2003 Revision of the U.S. Standard Certificate of Death
- Vital Records References

During the pilot period that began in 2000, the following vital records standards were developed or are in the process of being developed:

- U.S. Standard Certificate of Live Birth—2009 revision
- U.S. Standard Certificate of Death—2009 revision
- U.S. Standard Report of Fetal Death—2009 revision
- Birth-Edit Specifications for the 2003 Revision of the U.S. Standard Certificate of Birth
- Death-Edit Specifications for the 2003 Revision of the U.S. Standard Certificate of Death
- Vital Records References

The following organizations have collaborated with other vital records stakeholders to develop vital records standards:

- NHSC: Division of Vital Statistics—Responsible for the NVSS, which requires contributions from many organizations and individuals responsible for reporting to vital events occurring in the United States
- National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems: A national association of state vital records and public health statistics offices
- Health Level Seven International (HL7): One of several American National Standards Institute accredited standards development organizations operating in the health care arena to produce clinical and administrative data standards for the health care domain
- Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE): A standards organization that promotes the harmonization of established standards such as DICOM (Digital Imaging and Communications in Medicine) and HL7 to address specific clinical needs in support of optimal patient care

METHOD

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RESULTS

The following vital records standards have been developed or are in the process of being developed to support data exchange and interoperability of vital records information:

- Electronic exchange using HL7 and IHE-based standards
- Improving the timeliness, accuracy, and completeness of vital records data

Developing Vital Records Standards for Electronic Health Record Systems

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