

III. Registration of Vital Events

The origin, flow and disposition of North Carolina vital records are illustrated in the flow diagram on the following page. A brief history of vital records processing and current registration practice in North Carolina is presented.

The Bureau of Vital Statistics was created by an act of the General Assembly in 1913. The public health authority of this department and the laws that it administers are contained in Chapter 130A, Article 4, of the General Statutes of North Carolina. Within the organizational structure of the Department of Health and Human Services, the State Registrar of Vital Statistics is appointed by the State Health Director. Duties of the State Registrar are accomplished by Vital Records, a branch of the State Center for Health Statistics (SCHS).

Birth and Death

The collection of birth and death records began on Oct. 1, 1913. The Department of Health and Human Services is the custodian of these records. The hospital administrator or person attending a non-hospital delivery is required to file a birth certificate within five days after date of birth or fetal death report within 10 days after delivery. The funeral director or person burying or otherwise disposing of a body is responsible for filing a death certificate with the local registrar within five days after death.

The local registrar is the county health director. A staff person of the county health department, designated by the local registrar as deputy registrar, carries out registration procedures locally. The deputy registrar reviews electronic

birth records from his or her local facility(ies) and releases the records to N.C. Vital Records and local register of deeds. The deputy registrar forwards the original death certificates to the Department of Health and Human Services on the fifth and 20th days of the month following the death, where they are processed and permanently preserved. Microfilmed copies and electronic data from birth and death certificates are sent to the National Center for Health Statistics.

North Carolina was admitted into the National Center for Health Statistics national death registration area in 1916 and the national birth registration area in 1917.

Fetal Death

North Carolina law requires the filing of a fetal death report for fetal deaths (stillbirths) of 20 or more weeks gestation. Legislation enacted by the 1971 General Assembly and subsequent legislation requires that therapeutic abortions be reported separately, effective May 19, 1971. Thus, the induced abortion report form now replaces a fetal death report for the very few therapeutic abortions occurring at 20 or more weeks gestation. For this reason, counts of fetal deaths and perinatal deaths since 1971 are not strictly comparable to counts in previous years.

Marriage and Divorce

From 2013 forward, marriage and divorce statistics are no longer included in this report but will be reported separately as they become available.

The Origin, Flow and Disposition of Vital Records North Carolina

