

## July 15, 2008 Meeting Notes

### Stakeholder Meeting Electronic Birth and Death Registration

**Agencies represented:** Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (MCDC), Office of Public Health Systems (OPHS), Vital Records, Office of Data, Research and Vital Statistics (ODRVS), Office of Public Health Informatics (OPHI), Application Governance Team, Office of Information Technology (OIT), Funeral Directors Association, Office of Integrated Access and Support, Maine State Archives, Maine Association of Professional Midwives, Office of Secretary of State, Office of Attorney General, and Office of Chief Medical Examiner.

**Attendees:** Chris Zukas-Lessard, Don Ward, Don Lemieux, Barry Marshall, Cindy Mervis, Toni Wall, Holly Arends, Julie Flynn, Kristine Perkins, Ken Finley, Mike Murphy, Paul Gauvreau, Peggy Greenwald, Barbara VanBurgel, Lisa Tuttle, Kelly Grenier, Sally Belanger, David Blocher, Jim Lopatosky, Richard Greenwald, Alice Rohman, Marty Henson, Brenda Corkum, Lorraine Wilson, Theresa Roberts, Jonathan Hachey, Hazel Stevenson.

**Supporting document:** *Agenda: Stakeholder Meeting – Electronic Birth and Death Registration, July 15, 2008.*

#### I. Objectives (for this meeting):

Don Ward described the objectives for the meeting: 1) Obtain a better understanding of the vital records systems scope and needs across Maine government and the general public, 2) Describe the work already done by MCDC, 3) Engage the partners who have an interest and investment in the program planning toward electronic birth certificates and electronic death certificates (EBC/EDC), and 4) Discuss funding to pay for a new system. During discussion that followed the opening remarks, it was mentioned that other vital records such as marriage, divorce and adoption should also be included in an electronic vital records system. Information from the court system could be added. The need for system imaging was discussed. It was mentioned that citizenship records could be added. The concept of tracking clients across programs and validating the identity of a person was also discussed.

#### II. Current Status: Don Lemieux (Office of Data, Research and Vital Statistics)

Don Lemieux described the current status of the vital records system. Maine began collecting vital records at the state level in 1892; we have 116 years of continuous use of current system of vital records. The EBC (Electronic Birth Certificate) process was explained. In 1995 the state implemented Windows-based software from JK Systems (no longer in business). It is an aging system and has developed problems; OIT is working with ODRVS to help stabilize the system. The state birth system is electronic, but towns are paper-based. He spoke about the benefit of having a redundant system with records at both the state and municipality. Some towns have had records destroyed [floods, fires, etc] so there is a need to keep paper and electronic records in different locations. In some instances towns have records the state does not have. Most states are converting to web-based systems and 19 states have systems up and running.

Don described how a centralized, electronic system will improve efficiency for vital records staff and other data users. There are more and more Federal initiatives such as the Help America Vote Act, Real ID, Medicaid citizenship verification, as well as proposed Federal Intelligence Reform (terrorism prevention). Other benefits to an electronic system include the fact that we are running out of room for paper –we are storing in excess of 3 million paper records, paper records are being destroyed through

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handling, searching electronic records is much easier than searching paper records, and a great deal of data entry would be eliminated.

Don described work to date to move us toward an electronic system, including a systems assessment, identification of functional requirements and development of a business plan. The Office recently applied for a CDC grant for EDC (Electronic Death Certificate), which is still being reviewed. During discussion it was mentioned that changes to Maine Law regarding 'public access' will be necessary.

### **III. Guest Speakers:**

#### **David Blocher and Jim Lopatosky (Office of Information Technology)**

David and Jim provided an overview of the Applications Governance Team, a DHHS/OIT initiative to look at DHHS systems, share information across systems and eliminate duplication. The vital records system is seen as a valuable identity management tool. Vital Records are the "system of record" for identity. The vision is to introduce a centralized, integrated vital records database system which would: centralize information; verify identity according to federal guidelines; have the capability to connect to all other applications; and tie to imaged records;

#### **Kristine Perkins (Office of Public Health Emergency Preparedness)**

Kris spoke of the need to link data systems to preparedness and provided examples: Points of dispensing for vaccination during an event (such as a pandemic); immunization [record keeping]; hospital preparedness; and fatality registry during an event. In an event, we will need to provide rapid death information up to the federal level as quickly as possible.

#### **Sally Belanger (Funeral Directors Association)**

Sally reminded everyone that following a death, taking care of the family of the decedent is most important. They need to get back to reality as quickly as possible. They need a death certificate as soon as possible to access needed resources. Electronic Death Reporting will provide many benefits including: timeliness; eliminate additional charges by short-staffed funeral homes to families (i.e. gas mileage for tracking down signatures for certificates); efficient tracking of disease processes and deaths [such as during an event]; and help alleviate identity theft. Sally described the process in Maryland, a state she is familiar with. It was mentioned that among Maine funeral directors, only 8 members are not electronic, and 6 of those are retired.

Discussion followed about electronic signatures. Paul Gauvreau stated that Maine statutes (Title 10) require that electronic signatures must conform to standards adopted by Secretary of State, but no standards have been adopted as yet. A simple solution might be to adopt use of digital signatures for death certificates by inserting "not withstanding" language.

#### **Barbara VanBurgel (Office of Integrated Access and Support)**

OIAS has 22 programs of eligibility including: Child Support enforcement; Medicaid; Disability determination for social security; Fraud and recovery determinations and investigations; US Dept of Agriculture Food Stamps (Supplement) program; etc;. OIAS uses vital records for proof of identity (clients must provide copies of birth certificate, immigration records, citizenship) and for child support purposes (birth cert. for kids, marriage and divorce records, etc.). Records must be copied, verified and

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filed. OIAS devotes 4 full-time staff just for filing, etc. There are 330 people who work in her office and eliminating this paper work could free them up to do their jobs. They cannot destroy records; for example, six years of child support cases containing vital records are currently filling 8 tractor trailers full of records – being [digitally] imaged.

Barbara spoke of the need for a citizenship registry. Discussion followed about confidentiality and public access issues.

**Additional Discussion**

Julie Flynn, Deputy Secretary of State briefly described use of vital records data by the Bureau of Corporations, Elections and Commissions, including the Central Voter Registration System. ODRVS posts a file on a site which is pulled in to be viewed and compared with voter record then used to mark voters' registration deceased. Also, adoptions and marriages in another country must be verified and authenticated. Birth and death records need to be verified and authenticated.

Maine has oldest population in the country; more mature citizens have fragile records destroyed each time they are handled.

It was mentioned that changes in business processes will likely occur as a result of changing death registration from a paper based system to an electronic system. Some towns may feel they would lose revenue. However, the workload at the town would also likely decrease.

**IV. Stakeholder Role and Discussion: Don Ward**

Don asked if all the right people (organizations represented) were present. Others to include are: Maine Medical Association (invited), towns (invited), Motor Vehicles (invited), Courts and Medical Examiners. From the comments heard this morning, we need your input so that we can design a system that provides you with the appropriate access and linkage to MCDC's system; there can be no assumptions. Continue to come to the table and designate people to work with us to help move things forward.

**V. Project Plan: Lisa Tuttle**

Lisa explained that OIT migrated the EBC System to Oracle – it's now stable but still fragile. We have been working on EBC/EDC requirements for 5 years. The EBC/EDC Requirements deliverable really only incorporates MCDC requirements; it does not include what was said here today. It's good work but really only a starting point. The deliverable that drafted a business plan looked at other states and strongly recommended that Maine use no new development systems. It recommended that we consider and use commercial, off-the-shelf products and technical products that are already out there. There would be a shorter implementation period and it would be less expensive. A modular approach may be feasible (i.e. a first module for birth certificates, then, when the state is ready for the next phase, a module for death certificates, and so on).

A draft funding plan exists. Approximately \$1.5 – 3 million is needed for basic functionality. Modular implementation could spread out the costs. There are procurement hoops to consider. Fast procurement would be desirable versus an arduous RFP (Request For Proposal) process.

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Lisa described three focus areas as 1) selecting a system: what tool do we use and how to put it in place; 2) legislation and policy level activities that need changes; and 3) business process work: what kinds of changes need to be made to the business processes.

Lisa mentioned that a draft Project Charter exists but needs to be updated. We will fold what we learned today into the draft project charter and send out for review. We will also draft a project plan with the stakeholder needs and wants within a realistic timeline.

#### **VI. Next Steps:**

1. We will send out a summary of today
  - i) **Please think about your core objectives and email them to [Theresa.Roberts@Maine.gov](mailto:Theresa.Roberts@Maine.gov) so that we can collect them and fold them into the draft charter.**
2. We will take a look forward – broad steps (using a calendar); and
3. We will request a commitment by way of the name of a representative of each organization;
4. Also, if you are interested in the budget discussion, please let us know and we will ask for your participation that as well.