

INSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION TO COMPLETE THE VITAL STATISTICS DATA FILES APPLICATION

Distribution of vital statistics birth and death data files is governed by the Health and Human Services Agency and administered by the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Vital Statistics Advisory Committee (VSAC).

Requests for data files are received by the Health Information and Research Section (HIRS) Data Request Desk. Once all supporting documentation is received and the package is complete, the request is forwarded to VSAC for review. Information about VSAC, including scheduled VSAC meetings and materials deadline submission dates are available via the CDPH website: www.cdph.ca.gov/services/boards/Pages/VSAC.aspx.

The Vital Statistics Data Files Application is located on the website: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/ohir/Pages/OHIRApplications.aspx>. If you have questions about completing the application, contact HIRS at OHIR@cdph.ca.gov or by phone at 916-552-8095.

Refer to "[Recommended Practices for Safeguarding Access to Confidential Data](#)" for guidelines on security measures to be used in research protocols.

Information about CPHS and their approval process can be obtained via the CPHS website: <http://www.oshpd.ca.gov/Boards/CPHS/researchers.html>; via email at cphs-mail@oshpd.ca.gov; or by calling (916) 326-6660.

The CD-ROM files contain the birth or death data in American Standard Code Information Interchange (ASCII) format. The files are not comma-delimited. There is no software included and the files are not executable or searchable as is. The data must be uploaded into a statistical database package such as SAS or SPSS to search and or aggregate the data for use. Some birth files are available in SAS format on request. Please contact the Health Information and Research Section for information.

REQUESTS FOR BIRTH DATA FILES

All requests to obtain birth data files must be reviewed first by CPHS and then by VSAC.

After you receive your approval letter from CPHS, submit the following items for VSAC review:

1. A completed Vital Statistics Data Files Application with the specific protocol pages and paragraphs listed for questions in the Project Description, Security, and Access to Data sections of the application;
2. A copy of the CPHS approval letter;
3. A copy of the CPHS-approved research protocol, including all attachments;
4. Appropriate payment—a check or money order made payable to California Department of Public Health.

Send these four items to the address in the section titled "Payment and Mailing Instructions."

Failure to provide the requested information may result in delay in processing your request. You will be contacted if additional information is required for your application package.

The complete application and documentation will be forwarded to VSAC for review. Once approved by VSAC, the data files CD will be mailed to you.

REQUESTS FOR DEATH DATA FILES

NOTE: If you are requesting death data files for fraud prevention or law enforcement, please use the application for law enforcement/fraud prevention located on the web page.

Requests for death data files that include personal identifiers such as name, certificate number, address, Social Security Number, or mother's maiden name are required to be reviewed and approved first by VSAC, then by CPHS. Please see our website for descriptions of death data files available.

Submit the following items for VSAC review:

1. A completed Vital Statistics Data Files Application with the specific protocol pages and paragraphs listed for questions in the Project Description, Security, and Access to Data sections of the application;
2. A copy of the CPHS-approved protocol, including all attachments—also include a copy of the CPHS approval letter if the project has been reviewed by CPHS;
3. Appropriate payment—a check or money order made payable to California Department of Public Health.

Send these three items to the address in the section titled "Payment and Mailing Instructions."

Failure to provide the requested information may result in delay in processing your request. You will be contacted if additional information is required for your application package.

Data will be sent to you upon VSAC and CPHS approval. If you do not have CPHS approval, your application package will be forwarded to CPHS for review and approval. You may be contacted by a CPHS member or may be required to attend a CPHS meeting as part of the CPHS review. CPHS will send you an approval letter. You will need to send a copy of the CPHS approval letter to the Health Information and Research Section Data Request Desk. The data files CD will be mailed to you upon receipt of the CPHS letter.

PAYMENT AND MAILING INSTRUCTIONS

We cannot accept credit cards or purchase orders as a form of payment. Payment is required before data files are released. If an invoice is needed in order to process a check, contact the Health Information and Research Section at the telephone number or email listed below. Make check or money order payable to California Department of Public Health. Include a copy of the invoice or application with the check. *DO NOT mail checks or money orders without a copy of the application or invoice.*

Mail the check or money order and a copy of the application or invoice to:

California Department of Public Health
Center for Health Statistics and Informatics
Attn: HIRS—Data Request Desk
Mail Station Code 5102
P.O. Box 997410
Sacramento, CA 95899-7410

Phone: (916) 552-8095
Fax: (916) 650-6889
Email: OHIR@cdph.ca.gov

COURIER DELIVERIES

Private courier deliveries (FedEx, DHL, etc.) are not accepted using the P.O. Box address above. If you would like to send your completed application package via courier, please call or email for the physical delivery address.

The California Department of Public Health's Federal Taxpayer ID Number is 74-3204993.

TYPES OF BIRTH AND DEATH DATA FILES

Birth and Fetal Death data files are compiled from the information reported on birth and fetal death certificates, including detailed demographic information related to the child, mother, and father, as well as medical data related to the event. Death data files are compiled from the information reported on the death certificates, including detailed demographic information related to the decedent.

Birth Statistical Master Files are the largest and most comprehensive of the birth data files. These files contain detailed demographic information related to the child, mother, and father, as well as medical data related to the birth. A list of birth file variables can be found at:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/data/dataresources/requests/Pages/OHIRBirthVariables.aspx>

Birth Cohort File is a linked birth and death file that follows infants for the first year of life. The cohort files contain linked birth, infant death, and fetal death data. There is no cohort file for 1998. A list of birth cohort file variables can be found at:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/data/dataresources/requests/Pages/OHIRBirthVariables.aspx>

Fetal Death Statistical Master Files contain data obtained from fetal death certificates registered in California each year. These files contain demographic information related to the child, mother, and father, as well as medical data related to the fetal death. The medical data includes the underlying cause of the fetal death. Personal identifiers on the Fetal Death files are names and certificate numbers. There are no other personal identifiers available on Fetal Death files. A list of fetal death statistical master file variables can be found at:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/data/dataresources/requests/Pages/OHIRBirthVariables.aspx>

Death Statistical Master Files are the largest and most comprehensive of the death data files. A list of death statistical master file variables can be found at:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/data/dataresources/requests/Documents/Death%20Statistical%20Master%20File%20Variables.pdf>

Death Public Use Files are subsets of the Death Statistical Master files. The file structure and the variable coding methodology are designed to facilitate trend analysis and to simplify computer programming. A list of death statistical master file variables can be found at: A list of variables for the death public use file can be found at:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/data/dataresources/requests/Documents/Death%20Public%20Use%20File%20Variables.pdf>

Merged Death Files are subsets of the Death Statistical Master Files and contain the most commonly used variables. These files have a consistent record layout over all the years and are intended to facilitate long-term trend analysis to simplify computer programming. These files do not contain zip code or mother's maiden name. A list of variables for the merged death files can be found at:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/data/dataresources/requests/Documents/Merged%20Death%20File%20Variables.pdf>

Multiple Cause of Death Files are created by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and include underlying, immediate, intermediate, and contributing causes of death and demographic data. Each record may include up to 20 causes of death derived from California death certificates. All causes of death are coded according to the International Classification of Diseases. These files include certificate numbers, but do not include names or other personal identifiers. These files can be linked to other death files using the certificate number. A list of variables for these files may be obtained at the NCHS site or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) site:

http://wonder.cdc.gov/wonder/sci_data/mort/mcmort/mcmort.asp