

Resolution 2011-1
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems

TITLE: 2011 Revision of the Model State Vital Statistics Act and Regulations

BACKGROUND:

The vital statistics of the United States are collected and published through a decentralized, cooperative system. Responsibility for the registration of births, deaths, fetal deaths, marriages, divorces and annulments and the reporting of induced terminations of pregnancy is vested in the 57 vital registration jurisdictions. The degree of uniformity necessary for national statistics has been achieved by periodic issuance of recommended standards which take the form of model laws and regulations, definitions, and reporting forms.

The Model State Vital Statistics Act and Regulations (Model Law) was developed to serve as a model for states in preparing their own laws and regulations. The Model Law has been designed to improve the quality and uniformity of state data by establishing standard reporting requirements, definitions, and procedures for registering vital events. The Model Law has an impact on how vital statistics data are collected at the state level, which in turn impacts on national vital statistics.

The first Model Law was developed in 1907 by the Bureau of the Census and has been revised periodically through a cooperative process between the appropriate federal agency responsible for national vital statistics and state vital statistics offices. The last revision of the Model Law and regulations was in 1992.

A number of changes have occurred since 1992 which necessitated a thorough review and revision of the Model Law. These changes range from an increased focus on security of vital records in order to prevent identity theft for criminal intent or terrorism, to ensuring that there is adequate redundancy to preserve vital records in the event of a natural disaster. The widespread adoption by states of electronic birth and death registration systems has resulted in improved timeliness and data quality of vital records, making them more valuable both for administrative use by government agencies and for research purposes. The consequence is a corresponding emphasis in the Model Law on protection of confidentiality of personally identifiable information, especially given the increased expectation by the public of protection of medical information as a result of the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act of 1996.

The 2011 Revision of the Model Law was developed by a working group consisting of seven state/local vital statistics executives and one former chief counsel of a local health department. The working group sought input from all State vital statistics officials and from other interested stakeholders in an effort to determine those areas that needed review and revision.

A draft of the revised Model Law was presented to the states for comment in December 2010 and 6 webinars to provide additional background on proposed changes were held in

January 2011. Over 200 comments were received from states and each individual comment was reviewed at the working group's March meeting, resulting in numerous changes.

In May, 2011 a final draft of the revised Model State Vital Statistics Act and Regulations was presented to the director of the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and distributed to all jurisdictions' vital records and statistics executives.

RECOMMENDATION:

The National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems endorses the draft 2011 Revision of the Model State Vital Statistics Act and Regulations contingent upon review and approval by the Association's Board of Directors of any future changes.

With this endorsement the Association encourages vital registration and statistics executives in all registration areas to consider and pursue when appropriate introduction of legislation necessary to adopt the general principles and practices of the draft 2011 Revision of the Model State Vital Statistics Act and Regulations for their area.

The Association will transmit this resolution to the Director of the National Center for Health Statistics, the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, the NCHS Board of Scientific Counselors, and the Council of State Governments.

Adopted this 8th day of June, 2011 at New Orleans, Louisiana.