



Death Records

Vital Records are categorized in the following areas:

1. Completely Open records – these are the records a municipality houses that have an occurrence date prior to January 1, 1892; “hands on” access is at the discretion of the municipal clerk based upon the condition of the records.
2. Open records – the following records are “open” once the number of years has passed since the date of occurrence – **Births 75 years; Marriages 50 years; Deaths 25 years and Fetal Deaths 50 years**. No identification or documentation is required in order to purchase a non-certified copy of a birth, death or marriage record. Certified copies of these birth, death or marriage records require identification and documentation in order to be purchased.
3. Closed records – the following records are “closed” until the number of years has passed since the date of occurrence to classify them as open – Births less than 75 years; Marriages less than 50 years; Deaths less than 25 years and Fetal Deaths less than 50 years. Identification and documentation is required in order to purchase a certified or non-certified copy of a birth, death or marriage record.

All requestors must meet the following requirements to access records:

- Researchers must make a written application to either DRVS or a municipal office to request a copy of a birth, death or marriage record. The application must contain the *first and last name of the individual on the record and the date of event* (minimally the year of event) in order for a record to be located. The fee for the search for the record must be submitted at the time of the request. Fees for certified copies of records are specified in statute for municipal clerks and DHHS as specified in CMR 10-146 Chapter 4 Rules for Public Access to Vital Records.

Additional Requirements for Genealogical Research

- All genealogist requests must include presentation of or a photocopy of the DRVS Researcher Identification Card (unless an individual is researching direct lineage e.g. grand parents, great grandparents etc. No other family records are accessible without the DRVS Researcher Identification Card.) This card affords access to the genealogist of all legal, non-confidential copies of birth, death and marriage that are not “open” by statute. Original records of adoption or legitimations cannot be issued or disclosed to anyone by a municipal clerk no matter what documents are presented. The original records for these events can only be accessed via DRVS.
- If an DRVS Researcher Identification Card is not presented, access to copies of records is restricted to those specified in Title 22 M.R.S.A. 2706 (5) as presented in the Eligibility Matrix that is attached to this procedure document and can be found at DRVS’ website at <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/public-health-systems/data-research/vital-records/forms/index.shtml>.
- Vital Records from 1892 to the present, there shall be no “hands on” access or perusal of vital records by the public or genealogists due to record preservation and confidentiality of records. There have been incidents when this type of access was granted and consequently information on the vital records was changed and/or confidential information such as adoptions and legitimations was disclosed. Municipal records are recorded in a variety of ways, but the older records typically were entered in books that contain confidential information. Research by genealogists for names and dates of events must occur outside of the municipal offices or the State office when genealogists do not have the minimum required information necessary for a municipal clerk or State staff to locate a particular record.