

New Vital Records Law Goes Into Effect

On July 12th, a new law preventing fraudulent use of vital records goes into effect. Vital records include birth certificates, fetal death and death certificates, marriage certificates, and domestic partner registrations. Maine's new law will require a person requesting a copy of records less than 100 years old to provide documentation establishing their direct and legitimate interest in the records.

Until now, Maine has been one of just a handful of states that have allowed anyone, including individuals with bad intentions and for profit entities, access to these records. Information from vital records will become completely open to the public 100 years from the date of the event.

Individuals who may access vital records less than 100 years old include:

- The person named on the record;
- The person's spouse or registered domestic partner;
- The parent(s) named on the record;
- Descendants of the person named on the record;
- Registrant's legal custodian, guardian, or conservator or respective authorized representative (includes attorney, physician, or funeral director); and
- Genealogists who have a Maine CDC issued researcher identification card.

Proof of identity must also be presented to the municipal and city clerks or state Vital Records Office staff. A brief application for securing a copy of the vital record must be filled out and presented, along with positive identification such as a driver's license, passport, or other government issued picture identification that clearly shows that the person requesting the record is who they say they are. Identification requirements apply whether the records are requested in person or by mail.

More information on this issue may be found at www.mainepublichealth.gov.