

Dear Funeral Director,

The Division is continually reviewing its processes and procedures to ensure compliance and efficiency. Over the past few months, the Division, along with its legal team, reviewed the Vital Records Act and Code. As a result, we have created detailed information and instructions to help both those needing to request a correction or amendment and those completing the requests.

Details of the revised processes are attached to this correspondence. They include: the Funeral Director Minor Death Correction Process, Major Death Amendment Process, and the Death Certificate Replacement Process.

The “Death Certificate Replacement Process” has been revised to extend the time frame to 30 days from the date the record was registered. Please see the attached “Death Certificate Replacement Process” for complete details.

The “Major Death Amendment Process” is completed by the Division. We have included a detailed summary of the process for your convenience as it should guide you through the amendment process. This attachment details the process needed to initiate a request along with the documents that must be submitted to support the request. Please see the attached “Major Death Amendment Process” for complete details.

The “Funeral Director Minor Death Correction Process” details the process to request a minor correction to a death record. It identifies the minor correction fields on the death record, the method the request may be made, who may make the request and what is needed before the correction may be completed by the local registrar or the Division. Please see the attached “Minor Death Correction Process” for complete details.

No changes were made to the method a Medical Examiner/Coroner (ME/C) certificate of death is amended as only the ME/C has the authority to amend a ME/C record within the first year.

Please read each of the attachments thoroughly and if there are any questions, please contact the Division by email at [dph.vitals@illinois.gov](mailto:dph.vitals@illinois.gov).

Sincerely,

George S. Rudis, M.A., C.P.H.A.  
Deputy State Registrar  
Division of Vital Records

### **Funeral Directors and the Minor Death Correction Process**

**Neither the local registrar nor the Division has the authority to make a correction without a written request from a person entitled to correct the record.**

Those entitled to request a correction to a death certificate include the **informant** listed on the record, the **physician** that signed the original record, the **funeral director** that signed the original record and the **decedent's spouse** that is listed on the record.

The **Minor Death Correction Fax Process** is available **ONLY** to an Illinois licensed funeral director to request a minor correction to a Medical Certificate of Death.

This document should be considered a general guideline for requesting a change. The State or Local Registrar may decline to accept the fax correction request if proof presented is not clear and convincing. If any conflict arises between the Act/Code and this document, the Act and Code will guide the decisions made to the death record.

Only the Illinois licensed funeral director, who signed the original death record, may request a **minor correction** by way of fax. This request must be completed on the funeral home's letterhead and faxed to either the local registrar or the Division. (Note that the system allows the local registrar **one** minor correction **transaction** per Medical Certificate of Death.) While the local registrar can make multiple minor changes under one transaction, if after the initial transaction the funeral director needs to make another minor correction to the same death certificate, the funeral director must fax the request to the Division. When this situation arises, please send an email to [dph.ivrs@illinois.gov](mailto:dph.ivrs@illinois.gov) that includes the name of the decedent and the date of death along with a note that you are requesting a second minor correction to a death record. We will review and if in order, email you the fax number.

The minor correction fax process is limited to **one year** from the date of death. Only certain fields can be corrected by this process. The request must include, at a minimum, the following 5 items:

- Name of the decedent,
- Date of death,
- County of death,
- Incorrect data (errors) and correct data (what it needs to be changed to) along with a brief statement explaining how the error occurred,
- The printed name, signature, license number, and copy of the funeral director's non-expired government issued photo ID that filed the original record.

The following is a list of **minor correction fields** along with a brief explanation of how to request a correction, and in some cases, other documentation that substantiate the requested change, besides the 5 items listed above that will be needed to request a correction.

Also, please note that not all minor corrections can be completed by the local registrar. When completing the minor correction transaction, the fields that open to the local registrar are minor corrections and may be completed per this document. The fields that will **not** open to the local registrar, but **may** be considered minor corrections are items 2, 6, 7, 11, 12, 21, 22, 23 and 24 as noted below. When deemed a minor correction, they can **only** be changed by the Division.

1. **Decedent's first and/or middle name.** If the correction does not change the pronunciation, you can correct Jon to John. If the correction changes the pronunciation, you must also submit a copy of the decedent's birth record.

2. **Decedent's last name.** If a spelling error, such as Wilson to Wilsion, you must also submit a copy of the decedent's birth record. If changing the last name completely, such as Wilson to Johnson, you must complete the major amendment process or, if within 30 days from the date registered, the replacement process.
3. **Sex.** You may request a change to the sex designation of the registered person, if justified by the given name. For example, if the decedent's first name is Jonathon you can change female to male, but if the decedent's first name is Kim, you cannot automatically change female to male or vice versa. In that case, look to the middle name to see if it justifies the correction. If the name was Kim Robert, then female could be changed to male. However, if the name was Kim Tracy, you must also submit a copy of the decedent's birth record.
4. **Date of Birth.** Minor if the change does NOT change the age of the decedent by more than 2 years. If it changes by more than 2 years, you may complete the major amendment process or, if within 30 days from the date registered, the replacement process.
5. **Place of Birth.** You can change the place of birth if it does not change the country of birth. For example, you can change Illinois to New York but you cannot change Illinois to Canada or Canada to Illinois as a minor correction. Illinois to Canada is a major amendment and follows the major amendment process or, if within 30 days from the date registered, the replacement process.
6. **Surviving Spouse First or Middle Name.** If the correction does not change the pronunciation of the first or middle name. If the correction changes the pronunciation, you must also submit a copy of the marriage license between the decedent and the surviving spouse.
7. **Surviving Spouse Last Name.** If the correction is to the last name, irrespective if it does not change the pronunciation, you must also submit a copy of the marriage license between the decedent and the surviving spouse. An example of a minor correction in this field would be Vasques to Vasquez. If the request is to change from Vasquez to Perez, it is considered a major amendment and you may complete the major amendment process or, if within 30 days from the date registered, the replacement process.
8. **Social Security Number.**
9. **Decedent's residence.**
10. **Parents First Names or Middle Names.** If the correction does not change the pronunciation of the first or middle name. If the correction changes the pronunciation, you must also submit a copy of the decedent's birth record.
11. **Parents Last Name.** If the correction is to the last name, irrespective if it does not change the pronunciation, you must also submit a copy of the decedent's birth record.

An example of a minor correction in this field would be Johnson to Johnson. If the request is to change from Johnson to Johnstone, it is a major amendment and the major amendment process or, if within 30 days from the date registered, the replacement process.

12. **Informant's First and Middle and Last Name.** If the correction does not change the pronunciation of the first or middle name. If the spelling error changes the pronunciation of the first or middle name, or the correction is to the last name, irrespective of the pronunciation, you must also submit a copy of the informant's birth record. An example of a minor correction in this field would be Miller to Millar. If the request is to change from Miller to Milton, it is a major amendment and the major amendment process or, if within 30 days from the date registered, the replacement process. In the case of a female who is/was possibly married, the birth certificate alone may not substantiate the change. In those cases, our office would also need the marriage license that shows her maiden name.
13. **Informant's relationship and mailing address.**
14. **Date doctor attended the deceased.** On physician or hospital letterhead, the doctor must indicate the name of the decedent, date of death, county of death, incorrect data and what it needs to be changed to, physician's printed name, signature and license number. The funeral director's printed name, signature, license number, and copy of the funeral director's non-expired government issued photo ID that signed and filed the original record and new record should also be included with the fax.
15. **Coroner contacted.**
16. **Time of death.**
17. **Decedent's Ethnicity.**
18. **Occupation and Industry.**
19. **Place of Death.**
20. **Armed Services.**
21. **Method of Disposition.**
22. **Place of Disposition.**
23. **Date of Disposition.**
24. **Funeral home name, address, license number.**
25. **Education and Hispanic origin.**

**REMEMBER** - If the death record was certified by the Medical Examiner/Coroner, then neither the **local registrar nor the Division can make a minor or major correction**. Only the Medical Examiner or Coroner can amend this type of death record. If a change needs to be made to a Medical Examiner/Coroner Certificate of Death, within 1 year from the date of death, contact their office for the change.

If you have any questions regarding this correspondence, please send them by email to [dph.vitals@illinois.gov](mailto:dph.vitals@illinois.gov).

May 12, 2011

### **Death Certificate Replacement Process**

The **Death Certificate Replacement Process** is available **ONLY** to an Illinois licensed funeral director.

This document should be considered a general guideline for requesting a change. The State Registrar may decline to accept a replacement record if the changes do not protect the integrity of the record. If any conflict arises between the Act/Code and this document, the Act and Code will guide the decisions made to the death record.

The replacement record process is available **ONLY** within **30 days** from the date the record was registered. The replacement option may be used to request a change to any field(s) on a death record.

Here are the details on how to complete the replacement process:

1. Print a blank death worksheet from IVRS or use a blank 8.5 x 14 paper death record.
2. Complete the death worksheet with the correct information **manually** and NOT in IVRS.
3. The **funeral director** and the **doctor** who signed the original record must sign the newly completed death worksheet.
4. Take the completed death worksheet along with a letter indicating which fields were changed and a brief explanation of why the error occurred to your local registrar. Let them know this is a replacement record.
5. The local registrar will sign and date the completed death worksheet and fax it to the Division at 217-557-7904, "Attention Replacement Record", along with the letter indicating which fields were changed. The replacement record must be filed within 30 days from the date of registration. The Division will review and either accept or reject within 4 business days.

If you have any questions please send them by email to [dph.vitals@illinois.gov](mailto:dph.vitals@illinois.gov) .

Revised May 5, 2011

## **Major Death Amendment Process**

The **Major Death Amendment Process** is a process available to all parties that request an amendment to a Medical Certificate of Death.

Major amendments are only approved and completed by the Division of Vital Records.

The sole responsibility and goal is to protect the integrity of the state's Vital Records. The Division of Vital Records will weigh the relative weight of all evidence presented.

This document should be considered a general guideline for requesting a change. The State Registrar may decline to amend a death record if the proof presented is not clear and convincing.

If any conflict arises between the Act/Code and this document, the Act and Code will guide the decisions made to the death record.

- A. When the requested amendment is **NOT** Cause of Death (COD) related and the replacement process is no longer an option, the following 5 items are required to request a major amendment:
1. Application for the Correction of a Death Record (VR 401.2);
  2. Affidavit and Certificate of Correction (VR 400);
  3. Documentation to support the amendment;
  4. The \$15 amendment fee and;
  5. Non-expired government issued photo ID of the requestor.
- B. When the amendment **is COD related**, the physician who signed the original death record must also be included in the amendment process. The following 4 items are required to request an amendment to the COD.
1. Application for the Correction of a Death Record (401.2);
  2. Completed death certificate worksheet signed by the physician who certified the original death record;
  3. The \$15 amendment fee and;

4. Non-expired government issued photo ID of the requestor.

*The application and affidavit are available for printing under the blank forms menu of IVRS.*

Remember, before initiating the major amendment process, check to see if this amendment can be completed by the Replacement Process.

The replacement record process is available within **30 days** from the date the record was registered. If within 30 days, please review the replacement process correspondence.

As it relates to a **Medical Certificate of Death** certified by a physician, below is a list of **Major Amendment fields**.

1. **Decedent's first and middle name.** After one year or if the decedent's birth record is not available or if the minor correction process is not an option.
2. **Decedent's last name.** If not a spelling or data entry error as indicated in the minor correction fax process, or if the decedent's birth record is not available, the major amendment process must be followed.
3. **Date of Death.**
4. **Date of Birth.** If changing the DOB changes the age by more than 2 years.
5. **Place of Birth.** When it changes the country of birth or after one year from the date of death.
6. **Marital Status.** When the request is to amend the marital status, and the request is by someone other than the informant, in addition to the items listed below, you must submit a detailed notarized statement from the informant listed on the death certificate that describes why or how the information was given incorrectly.

While some sections may require one "single source document" to amend, others may require multiple documents to substantiate the request. Such may be the case in the marital status section. Please provide all available documentation that tends to support your request to amend the marital status. Examples of documentation that may support such a request include, but are not limited to; marriage license and /or certificate, tax returns filed with Federal and State tax authorities, both the decedent's and the surviving spouse's driver licenses, statements from joint bank, brokerage and loan accounts, proof of title to the primary residence or land, policies of insurance, medical records at the time of death and copies of testamentary documents filed with the court. This is not an exhaustive list. All documents tending to support your requested change should accompany the application.

When the marital/civil union status is shown as married/civil unioned and a surviving spouse/partner is listed on the death record of the decedent then the marital/partnership status may be changed to:

- a. Widowed and the spouse/partner removed if a death certificate for the spouse/partner documenting that the spouse/partner died prior to the death of the decedent is submitted.
- b. Divorced or never married and the spouse/partner removed if a certificate of divorce/dissolution/annulment documenting the event occurred prior to the death of the decedent is submitted.

If the marital/civil union status is shown as married/civil unioned and a surviving spouse/partner is listed as unknown or is blank on the death record, then a marriage/civil union certificate must be provided to add the name of the surviving spouse/partner.

If the marital/civil union status is shown as married/civil unioned and the surviving spouse/partner's name needs to be changed, submit as many documents to support the amendment that are detailed above at the beginning of item 6.

When the marital/civil union status is shown as divorced, widowed or never married/civil unioned and no surviving spouse/partner is listed on the death record of the decedent then the marital/civil union status may be amended to married/civil unioned and the surviving spouse/partner added upon receipt of:

- a. Notarized affidavits from the informant and from the surviving spouse/partner stating that an error was made and stating the correct information, and a certification of the marriage/civil union record showing that the person to be listed as the surviving spouse/partner was married/civil unioned with the decedent prior to the death are submitted.
7. **Surviving Spouse/Partner.** After one year or if a marriage/civil union record is not available or if the minor correction process is not an option.
  8. **Parents Names.** After one year or if the decedent's birth record is not available or if the minor correction process is not an option.
  9. **Informant's name.** After one year or if the informant's birth record is not available or if the minor correction process is not an option. In the case of a female who is/was married, the birth certificate alone may not substantiate the change. In those cases, our office would also need the marriage license that shows her maiden name.
  10. **Time of death.** If changing the time of death, changes the date of death.
  11. **Cause of Death.** Lines A, B, C, interval, Part 2, autopsy information, if female and manner of death. After one year, all sections on the record are major amendments.

If there are any questions regarding this correspondence, please feel free to send an email to [dph.vitals@illinois.gov](mailto:dph.vitals@illinois.gov).

May 12, 2011