

Completing a Death Certificate

While death certificates vary from state to state, the following is the information required to complete a standard death certificate.

DECEDENT'S LEGAL NAME

DATE OF BIRTH

RESIDENCE OF DECEDENT

SURVIVING SPOUSE'S NAME

MOTHER'S NAME PRIOR TO FIRST MARRIAGE

PLACE OF DEATH

DECEDENT'S EDUCATION

Used to study the relationship between mortality and education (which roughly corresponds with socioeconomic status). This information is valuable in medical studies of causes of death and in programs to prevent illness and death. This information will not appear on the certified copy of the death certificate.

WAS DECEDENT OF HISPANIC ORIGIN?

Needed to identify health problems in a large minority population in the US. Identifying health problems will make it possible to target public health resources to this important segment of our population. This information will not appear on the certified copy of the death certificate.

RACE

Essential for identifying specific mortality patterns and leading causes of death among different racial groups. It is also used to determine if specific health programs are needed in particular areas and to make population estimates. This information will not appear on the certified copy of the death certificate.

OCCUPATION AND INDUSTRY

Useful in studying deaths related to jobs and in identifying any new risks. For example, the link between lung disease and lung cancer and asbestos exposure in jobs such as shipbuilding or construction was made possible by this sort of information on death certificates. This information will not appear on the certified copy of the death certificate.

DECEDENT'S USUAL OCCUPATION

Not necessarily the last occupation of the decedent. Never enter "retired". Give kind of work decedent did during most of his/her working life, such as claim adjuster, farmhand, coal miner, janitor, store manager, college professor, or civil engineer. If decedent was a homemaker at the time of death but had worked outside the household during his/her working life, enter that occupation. If decedent was a homemaker during most of his/her working life, and never worked outside the household, enter "homemaker". Enter "student" if the decedent was a student at the time of death and was never regularly employed or employed full time during his or her working life. This information will not appear on the certified copy of the death certificate.

KIND OF BUSINESS/INDUSTRY

Such as insurance, farming, coal mining, hardware store, retail clothing, university, or government. Do not enter firm or organization names. If decedent was a homemaker, then enter either "own home" or "someone else's home" as appropriate. If decedent was a student, then enter type of school, such as high school or college. This information will not appear on the certified copy of the death certificate.