



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
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Registry of Vital Records and Statistics  
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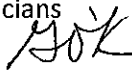
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Circular Letter 2013-01

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[www.mass.gov/dph/rvrs](http://www.mass.gov/dph/rvrs)

To: Massachusetts Licensed Physicians  
From: Gerald F. O'Keefe, JD, MPH   
Bureau Director  
Bureau of Health Information, Statistics, Research and Evaluation  
Re: **IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT CHANGES TO THE DEATH CERTIFICATE PROCESS**  
Date: February 25, 2013

In January 2014, Massachusetts will transition the current paper death certificate process to an electronic death registration system, commonly known as an "EDRS." Roll-out activities will begin later this year. As you will be an integral user of this new system, it is essential that you are aware of the important changes that will be coming soon.

In 2011, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Registry of Vital Records and Statistics (RVRS) successfully implemented phase one, the birth registration component, of the web-based Vitals Information Partnership (VIP) system. Phase two, the EDRS, will enable authorized physicians, funeral directors, hospitals, nursing homes, hospice centers, medical personnel, boards of health, and city/town clerks to complete, register and amend death certificates through a secure online system.

EDRS will benefit all partners in the death certificate process, as well as the families of decedents. EDRS will:

- Save time and effort with online cause-of-death entry and certification
- Enable a paperless workflow, with the option to certify records by fax
- Improve accuracy of death certificates through instant edits and online help
- Significantly improve timeliness of data available for surveillance and research from months to days
- Prevent fraud through secure user authentication, immediate validation of social security numbers, birth/death matching, and prevention of loss and forgery of paper certificates

The VIP EDRS is being built upon a proven framework, using at its core a death registration system being used by a number of other states and jurisdictions. While the core system already exists, RVRS is currently working with the vendor and a working group of our vital records partners, including physician representatives, to customize the application for Massachusetts. At the same time, implementation, marketing, training and roll-out plans are being developed.

We encourage you to stay current on developments and welcome those of you who wish to participate in the development and planning processes. In the coming weeks, RVRS will begin posting status information from a link on our home page <http://mass.gov/dph/rvrs> and reaching out through various other methods to all of our partners in the death certificate process. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions regarding the new VIP EDRS, please contact the VIP Project Team at [vipprojectteam@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:vipprojectteam@massmail.state.ma.us). In the meantime, please feel free to share the enclosed brochure.