

# Birth Certificate Integrity: Strengthening National Security

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# NAPHSIS

## National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems

The association that represents all State  
vital and health statistics offices in the  
United States



# Presentation

- Vital Registration in the United States
- Birth certificate system today
- Intelligence Reform Act and birth certificate security
- Risks
- Solutions



# Vital Registration in the U.S.- 1

- There are 57 Vital Registration jurisdictions in the United States
- 50 States
- 5 territories (Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands)
- District of Columbia
- New York City



# Vital Registration in the U.S.- 2

- Most jurisdictions have local registrars
- 6,400 local registrars nationwide
- Jurisdictions use standard minimum dataset, but
  - No standardized certificates
  - No standardized issuance processes



# Vital Registration in the U.S.- 3

- Wide variation among jurisdictions
  - Level of automated systems
  - Birth and death databases
  - Extent of legacy records
  - Methods and systems for issuing certified copies
  - Access to records (open v. restricted)
  - Customer ID requirements
  - Physical plant and personnel security





# Birth Certificate System

- Proof of U.S. citizenship
- Birth certificates are breeder documents
  - Social Security cards
  - Driver's licenses
  - Passports
  - Little League enrollment
- Paper-based system
- Administered by state, local health depts.



# Birth Certificate System:

Hospital initiates the birth record

1. Hospital prepares birth certificate form
2. Hospital transmits to health department
3. Health department performs QA checks
4. Health department creates
  - Original legal records
  - Database
5. Health department sends Enumeration at Birth (EAB) file to SSA



# Birth Certificate System:

## Hospital initiates the birth record

6. Customers (the public and local, state and federal agencies) request copies



# Customer applies for copy- 1

1. Customer applies for certified birth certificate by
  - Mail
  - Phone
  - Fax
  - Internet
  - Walk-in



# Customer applies for copy- 2

2. Customer applies to health department
  - Local office
  - State office
3. Health dept. evaluates
  - Customer's ID
  - Customer's entitlement
4. Health dept. issues certified copy on paper





# Intelligence Reform Act

## (B) Requirements for proof and verification of identity as a condition of issuance

- Establish for each method of issuance
  - Mail
  - Phone
  - Fax
  - Internet
  - Credit card
  - Walk-in
  - Local v. Central Office
- Implies Authenticate Identity Document (AID) and Digital Image Access with DMVs



# Intelligence Reform Act

(C) Establish standards for processing birth certificate applications to prevent fraud

- Implies restricting access to records
- Implies Authenticate Identity Document (AID) and Digital Image Access with DMVs
- Implies centralized databases for issuance
- Implies physical and personnel security



# Intelligence Reform Act

## (c)(1)(A) Assistance in meeting federal standards

- Award grants to states

## (c)(2) (A) Assistance in matching birth and death records

### (i) Computerizing birth and death records

- Implies Electronic Birth Registration (EBR) for speed and accuracy
- Implies Electronic Death Registration (EDR) for speed and accuracy





# Intelligence Reform Act

- §7212. Driver's licenses and personal identification cards – replaced by Real ID Act of 2005
- Verification of documents
  - Implies national system among all vital records offices and DMVs
  - Implies Electronic Verification of Vital Events (EVVE)



# Intelligence Reform Act

- §7213. Social Security cards and numbers
  - (a) Security Enhancements
    - Establish minimum standards for verification of documents to establish eligibility
    - Implies EVVE
  - (c) Enumeration at Birth (EAB)
    - Prevent fraudulent obtainment of SSNs
    - Conduct study regarding EAB process



# Risks- 1

- Fraudulent document prepared by hospital?
  - Controls in hospitals?
  - Does jurisdiction audit hospitals?
- Certificate paper
  - Standardized?
  - Security features?



# Risks- 2

- Issued only to entitled persons?
  - Who is entitled?
  - How is entitlement proved?
  - Varies by jurisdiction
- Requestor's ID checked and verified?
- Issued from a centralized database?
  - 6,400 local registrars may not be linked to jurisdictions' databases
  - Local records may be outdated





# Solutions- 1

1. Standardized certificate safety paper
2. Birth-death matching
3. EVVE- Electronic Verification of Vital Events
4. EBRS- Electronic Birth Registration  
EDRS- Electronic Death Registration
5. Restricted Access to Records



# Solutions- 2

6. Improved customer ID requirements
7. Centralized database and issuance
8. Improved vital records office security
9. Prevent fraudulent birth registration



# Conclusions

- Existing birth certificate system has risks
- Birth certificate integrity can be improved
- Intelligence Reform Act provides paths to solutions
- Regulations must be written to meet requirements of law and the needs of the jurisdictions



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