

Efficiency of electronically-filed death certificates is an aid to grieving family members

Electronic filing of death certificates is now required in Kansas. Compliance with the regulation is going well. The Office of Vital Statistics reported an impressive increase from less than 500 physicians using the VRVweb Electronic Death Record System in July of 2016 (the law effective date of HB 2518) to over 2,700 users as of April 2017.

The expediency of the new regulation is not only a benefit to record keeping, but also to families. Claudia Ellerman, Wichita, sadly lost two family members within five months. Through that experience, she noted the benefit of a quickly accessible death certificate.

“In March 2016, my father-in-law died. It took two to three weeks to get the death certificate,” Ellerman said. “My son, Austin, died at the end of July.” Because that death certificate was filed electronically, “we had it in three days. It was amazing. The family is grieving. All they want is the death certificate so they can fill out the insurance paperwork and all the other forms, and move on.”

Ellerman decided to let the Office of Vital Statistics know what a difference that efficiency had made for her family. “They never hear from the public about this, so I thought I would tell them this change was very helpful” she said. Having quick access to the electronically filed death certificate helped her family deal with those details in a timely manner, when they were going through a lot.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment Office of Vital Statistics is pleased with the transition to electronic filing. Its next challenge is to meet Center for Disease Control's directive that 80 percent of all death events be filed within 10 days. For the month of April 2017, the Office of Vital Statistics reported the highest completion month, ever, of 67.4% percent of death events being filed within 10 days. Kansas is on its way to reach the 80 percent threshold.

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