

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

## **An Act Relating to Access to Vital Records**

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §2706**, as amended by PL 2009, c. 601, §12, is further amended to read:

### **§ 2706. Disclosure of vital records**

Custodians of certificates and records of birth, marriage and death ~~may~~shall permit inspection of records, or issue certified or informational copies of certificates or records, or any parts thereof, when satisfied that the applicant ~~therefor~~ has a direct and legitimate interest in the matter recorded, the decision of the state registrar or the clerk of a municipality being subject to review by the Superior Court, under the limitations of this section.

**2. Statistical research.** The state registrar may permit the use of data contained in vital records for purposes of statistical research. Such data may not be used in a manner that will identify any individual.

**3. National statistics.** The national agency responsible for compiling national vital statistics may be furnished such copies or data as it may require for national statistics. The State must be reimbursed for cost of furnishing such copies or data, and such data may not be used in a manner that will identify any individual, except as authorized by the state registrar.

**4. Unlawful disclosure of data.** It is unlawful for any employee of the State or of any municipality in the State to disclose data contained in such records, except as authorized in this section and except that a clerk of a municipality may cause to be printed in the annual town report the births reported within the year covered by the report, by number of births and location by city or town where birth occurred, deaths reported within the year covered by the report, by date of death, name, age and location by city or town where death occurred, and marriages reported within the year covered by the report by names of parties and date of marriage. ~~All other details of birth, marriage, divorce or death may not be available to the general public, except as specified in department rules.~~

**5. Records disclosed.** Vital records of a person must be made available at any reasonable time upon that person's request or the request of that person's spouse, registered domestic partner, descendants or collateral descendants, parents or guardians, grandparents, genealogists or that person's duly designated attorney or agent or attorney for an agent designated by that person or by a court having jurisdiction over that person whether the request be made in person, by mail, by telephone or otherwise, if the state registrar is satisfied as to the identity of the requester and, if an attorney or agent, if the state registrar is satisfied as to the ~~attorney~~attorney's or agent's authority to act as that person's agent or attorney. If the agent or attorney has been appointed by a court of competent jurisdiction, or the ~~attorney~~attorney's or agent's appearance for the person is entered therein, the state registrar shall upon request so ascertain by telephone call to the register, clerk or recorder of the court, and this must be deemed sufficient justification to compel

compliance with the request for the record. The state registrar shall, as soon as possible, designate persons in the Office of Data, Research and Vital Statistics who may act in the state registrar's absence or, in case of the state registrar's disqualification, to carry out the intent of this subsection. A record of birth, death, fetal death, marriage, divorce or domestic partner registration may be disclosed as necessary for the department to carry out its responsibilities.

**6. Address Confidentiality Program.** Access to vital records may be further restricted within the parties listed in subsection 5 according to procedures of the Address Confidentiality Program under Title 5, section 90-B.

**7. Public records.** ~~After 100 years from the date of birth for birth certificates, after 100 years from the date of death for fetal death certificates and death certificates, after 100 years from the date of marriage for marriage certificates and after 100 years from the registration of domestic partnerships, any person may obtain informational copies of these vital records in accordance with the department's rules. Any person may inspect, transcribe or abstract birth certificates, fetal death certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates and registrations of domestic partnerships created after 1893 in accordance with the department's rules, except as specified in subsection 6.~~

**8. Genealogical research.** ~~Custodians of certificates and records of birth, marriage and death may permit inspection of records by and issue noncertified copies to researchers engaged in genealogical research who hold researcher identification cards, as specified by rule adopted by the department. The department shall adopt rules to implement this subsection. Rules adopted by the department pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined by Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.~~

## SUMMARY

This bill makes more accessible to the public birth records, marriage records, domestic partnership registrations and death records while maintaining safeguards regarding certified copies of those records.