



National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics Hearing on Next Generation Vital Statistics

September 11-12, 2017
Humphrey Building, Washington DC

The National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics (NCVHS) is charged with advising HHS on health data, statistics, privacy, and national health information policy. Because the vital statistics system plays a critical role in public health surveillance, is essential to understanding the effectiveness of the healthcare and health financing system, and is relied upon for business and commerce, the Committee is taking this opportunity to explore the state of the existing national vital statistics system and identify possibilities for improvement.

Realizing the Potential of Vital Statistics

Despite the essential role vital statistics and related administrative data play in protecting a broad range of needs, especially national security and population health, stakeholders at the state and national level have shared concerns that the vital statistics system faces serious structural and resource challenges. As currently constituted, national data are developed through a federated network of data collected by states and territories, with differing laws and parameters on data use, and then shared with the federal government for aggregation.

- Vital statistics are the foundational data source for understanding the U.S. population, including identification of trends in disease and epidemics, e.g., the recent surge in opioid-related deaths.
- Health care providers, businesses, and government agencies at all levels as well as individual citizens, depend on vital records and the vital statistics system for identity establishment and protection, and a host of other critical uses for research, finance, planning, public records and services.
- Resources for vital statistics infrastructure are dependent on the ability of jurisdictions to issue records and assess fees, or secure the minimal funding available via contracts and data sharing agreements and support from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS).

NCVHS Hearing

To clearly define the challenges and identify potential approaches to address them, NCVHS is seeking input from key stakeholders from experts at HHS, other Federal agencies, states, and territories, as well as from researchers, healthcare providers, and organizations that rely on vital administrative and statistics data.

The guiding question the Committee will study is:

How do we transform a vulnerable, federated data collection network into a robust timely integrated sustainable multipurpose information system that produces timely data and information flows?

The objectives of this hearing are to:

- Identify the essential elements of the vital statistics system – the components and as a whole
- Assess its current status and risks to its viability
- Consider what actions are needed both to protect and improve the system.

The Committee is studying potential approaches to transform vital statistics and administrative data into a robust and sustainable system that generates timely, secure and integrated information flows to strengthen public health surveillance, enhance healthcare, and provide information for all governmental and private sectors that have come to depend on the system.