Federal Perspective on the National Vital Statistics System and the National Death Index

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National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) and the National Death Index (NDI)

- Need for the records?
- Governance of the records?
- Financing of the records?
- Collection, processing, management, and protection of the data?
- Sharing and use of the records?
- Timeliness and Quality of the data?
National Vital Statistics System

• 57 registration jurisdictions

• Complete census----births, deaths, & fetal deaths

• Annually, there are about:
  – 4.0 million birth events
  – 2.6 million death events
  – 26,000 fetal death events (20 weeks or more gestation)
Why We Need the Records for the NVSS?

• Describe the health status of the Nation

• Surveillance of new and/or emerging diseases

• Program management and policy making

• Health research
How is NVSS financed? (Statistics vs. Civil Registration)

- Vital records financed thru civil registration
  - Civil registration financed through the sale of birth and death certificates, or sale of services.
  - Most states have removed state appropriations from the vital records programs

- NVSS financed through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program contract (VSCP) with the jurisdictions
  - Support civil registration but do not completely finance it.

- In 2017, the total contract is $21.1 million per year. Components:
  - Births $9.5 million
  - Deaths $8.5 million
  - Fetal Deaths $1.1 million
  - Infant/Death linkages $2.0 million
Governance of Records for the NVSS

- Vital records are governed by state, not Federal, laws and statutes
  - Laws/regulations about access & use of the records or parts of the records vary.
  - Model vital records and statistics law exist, but is not implemented nationwide
  - Use of the records are outlined in the VSCP contract
  - Participation in the VSCP contract is optional------100% participation.

- Electronic vital registration systems
  - All jurisdictions have an electronic birth system
  - 46 jurisdictions have an electronic death registration system, not all of which are statewide or have complete coverage
  - 28 jurisdictions have an electronic fetal death system
Flow of Records from States for NVSS

- Birth Database
- Fetal Death Database
- Mortality Database
- DVS Transactional Database

States → DVS Transactional Database → States

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Release of Vital Statistics

• Annual Vital Statistics publications and topic-based Data Briefs
  – Births
  – Deaths
  – Fetal deaths

• Vital Statistics Rapid Release Program
  – Surveillance data on births and deaths

• Public Use Files – births and deaths

• Files on CDC Wonder

• Confidential Research Files (approval of research project)
  – Births
  – Deaths
  – Fetal deaths

• Research Data Centers
National Death Index (NDI)

• Comprised of:
  – All deaths occurring within the U.S from 1979 forward
  – All military deaths occurring overseas

• Jurisdictions and DOD owned the records in database
  – NCHS/DVS is an intermediary
  – Actions governed through data use agreements

• Used for data matching of researchers’ files with death certificates to determine if a person has died, and if so, the cause of death

• Currently over 90 million records in the database
Flow of Death Records in Creating the NDI and NVSS-Mortality Files
Use of the National Death Index

• Researcher must submit an IRB-approved project to NDI

• NDI Advisory Committee (comprised of state vital statistics professionals, & Federal/state/private researchers)
  – Reviews/approves each NDI application

• DVS Director reviews/approves applications approved by Advisory Comm.

• NDI staff matches researchers’ records with NDI database using at least one of the following criteria:
  – First and last name and social security number
  – First and last name and month and year of birth
  – Social security and date of birth and sex

• NDI staff provides the results (fact &/or cause of death) to the researcher and assess the fee for matching services
Financing of and Access to the National Death Index

• **100% receipt operated----no appropriated dollars.**
  – Receipts must cover:
    • Payment of states for use of their records
  • NCHS NDI salaries and fringe (100%)
  • NDI operating expenses including:
    – Travel
    – IT/computer costs
    – NAPHSIS Cooperative Agreement
    – NDI Advisory Committee
  – NDI fee structure set by the jurisdictions
  – NDI access and use rules set by jurisdictions
    • Must cover the laws in the most restricted states.
What are the challenges and opportunities for the NVSS and the NDI?
Thank You!

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