

# How to Get Documentation of Life Events

## *Why are vital records important?*

Vital records are certificates or reports of life events like births, deaths, adoptions, marriages, divorces or annulments. These certificates can be used to settle estates, obtain benefits, identify public health problems, identify the leading causes of death in Virginia, and more.

## *Who maintains copies of vital records?*

Death, birth, marriage, and divorce certificates are kept by your local health department **if** the event occurred in Virginia. However, if the death occurred within the last 30 days, you must get the certificate from the city/county where it was originally filed.



## *Who can get copies of birth, marriage, divorce, and death certificates?*

- Only immediate family members (parent, current spouse, child, sibling, or grandparent) can get copies of the certificates and they must provide a valid ID.
- Legal guardians must provide custody papers in order to get a certificate.
- Aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws, former spouses, etc. cannot get any copies.

## *How much does a vital record cost?*

- \$12.00 for a certified copy of a certificate and/or search of a vital record
- Cash, check, money orders, VISA, or MasterCard accepted

**For more information:** [www.vdh.virginia.gov/thomas-jefferson/vital-records](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/thomas-jefferson/vital-records)



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