



## ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN BIRTH CERTIFICATES

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### COPIES OF VITAL RECORDS

Copies of vital records, including birth certificates, can be obtained from the state or the town where the event occurred.

The **State Vital Records Office** at the Department of Public Health maintains a statewide registry of all births, marriages, civil unions, deaths, and fetal deaths that have occurred in Connecticut since July 1, 1897.

Each **municipal registrar of vital statistics** (usually the town clerk) maintains a registry of all births, marriages, civil unions, deaths, and fetal deaths that occur within the town.

### QUESTION

Who has access under state law to information in birth certificates less than 100 years old? How would a public agency that does not currently have access gain it? You indicated that a local board of education would like access to names and addresses to conduct outreach to incoming kindergarten classes.

### SUMMARY

By law, only specified "eligible parties" may obtain, access, examine, or disclose information contained in copies of birth records and certificates that are less than 100 years old. Furthermore, the law prohibits anyone, including eligible parties, from receiving information contained in the "information for health and statistical use only" or "administrative purposes only" sections of a birth certificate, unless specifically authorized by the Department of Public Health (DPH)

for statistical or research purposes. Similarly, the Social Security number of a parent listed on a birth certificate cannot be released, except to parties authorized by state or federal law. And confidential files on paternity, adoption, gender change, or gestational agreements cannot be released, except upon court order ([CGS § 7-51](#)). Local boards of education are not designated as eligible parties.

DPH also releases identifiable health data it collects, including information contained in birth certificates, to other entities, but only for bona fide medical or scientific research purposes ([CGS § 19a-25](#) and Conn. Agencies Regs. § [19a-25-3](#)).

According to DPH, releasing birth certificate data, like names or addresses, to a local board of education would not meet this medical or scientific research standard.

Thus, it appears legislation would be necessary to give an entity, such as a local board of education described above, access to information in birth certificates less than 100 years old. The General Assembly could, for example, amend [CGS § 7-51](#) to make such an entity an eligible party.

## **ELIGIBLE PARTIES**

State law requires registrars of vital statistics and DPH to restrict access to birth certificates. Only the following eligible parties may obtain, access, examine, or disclose information contained in copies of birth records and certificates that are less than 100 years old:

1. the person whose birth is recorded, if (a) older than age 18, (b) a certified homeless youth, or (c) an emancipated minor;
2. the person's children, grandchildren, spouse, parent, guardian, or grandparent;
3. the chief executive officer of the municipality where the birth occurred, or his or her agent;
4. the local health director of the municipality where the birth occurred or the mother resided at the time of the birth, or his or her agent;
5. attorneys representing the person or the person's parent, guardian, child, or surviving spouse;
6. a conservator appointed for the person;
7. members of certain genealogical societies;
8. agents of a state or federal agency, as approved by DPH; and
9. researchers DPH approves in connection with morbidity and mortality studies ([CGS § 7-51](#)).

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