

AUDIT COMMITTEE SUMMARY
Audit of The Office of the City Clerk - Vital Records
Report Issued July 9, 2021

Audit Objective

Determine if vital records data (birth and death certificates) are adequately protected and issued in accordance with City and State regulations.

Background

The Vital Records Division has been under the Office of the City Clerk since 2012. It maintains records of births, deaths, and fetal deaths that occur in Bexar County. Vital Records maintains hard copies of both birth and death records in bound notebooks. Hard copy birth records are available from 1897, death records from 1873, and fetal death records from 1952. It also stores electronic images of birth records from 1964 forward. Additionally, the Vital Records Division has access to a birth records system (TxEver) maintained by the Texas Department of State Health Services to retrieve and issue birth records of individuals born in Texas, but outside of Bexar County.

Vital Records is authorized to issue certificates to qualified applicants who provide adequate proof of eligibility. Applicants can order certificates via mail, in person, or online using a third-party provider. Death certificates are usually obtained through the funeral home. Fees for both types of certificates are set by the State. Revenue from selling certificates, protective covers for certificates, notary fees, and postage were \$1,500,867 for fiscal year (FY) 2020.

For FY 2020, Vital Records recorded 33,692 total birth certificates/amendments/replacements, and 25,490 total death registrations/amendments and related documents.

Scope & Methodology

The scope of this audit covered the registration, safeguarding, and issuance of certificates for birth and death records as well as associated amendments and corrections for the period October 2018 through December 2020.

We interviewed staff, reviewed policies and procedures, and observed processes at the Vital Records Division office to understand and test controls for registering, maintaining, and issuing certificates for birth and death records. Testing criteria included pertinent Texas statutes and regulations, the Local Registrar Handbook, and relevant City administrative directives. Our direct testing included reviewing the accuracy and completeness of birth and death records in each system and testing supporting documentation for issuance of certificates.

Conclusions

The Office of the City Clerk is appropriately registering birth and death records and issuing certified copies in accordance with City and State regulations. Controls are in place to ensure the Vital Records Division is physically secure from external threats and that records and banknote paper is protected from theft or misuse. Vital Records personnel

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are also properly vetted and trained to manage sensitive records and data. In addition, systems used to store vital records data are appropriately restricted to authorized personnel only.

However, we did note the following areas where the Office of the City Clerk should improve vital records processes:

- All amended records should be appropriately marked as amended in both hard copy and electronic format.
- All birth records for deceased individuals born in Bexar County should be appropriately marked as deceased.
- Determine if password requirements for the Mainframe system can be modified to meet City standards.
- Update the disaster recovery plan to reflect best practices and include specifics for the Vital Records Division. Also, formally document the Vital Records Division Business Continuity Plan.

The Office of the City Clerk Management agreed with the audit findings and has developed positive action plans to address them.