

STAR application: Vital Records at DMV, a partnership of the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles and the Virginia Department of Health's Division of Vital Records

Overview

Since March 1, 2014, certified copies of Virginia birth records have been available for purchase at 80 Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) locations throughout the commonwealth. This service is made possible by the strong partnership of DMV and the Virginia Department of Health's (VDH) Division of Vital Records. It has been an unqualified success, with more than 129,323 birth certificates sold at Virginia DMV locations in the first 14 months of the partnership. The next step, slated to begin August 3, 2015, will bring marriage, divorce, and death record service to DMV counters. The partnership has become a model for the expansion and improvement of state government services to citizens, and Virginia is proud to share the story of its success.

The DMV/VDH partnership was developed as a way to increase citizen access to vital records by leveraging DMV's already extensive service footprint, including 75 fixed locations and five mobile offices operating in all corners of Virginia. Prior to the partnership, Virginia-born individuals could access birth certificates and other vital records in one of two ways: by contacting the Division of Vital Records by mail or online and requesting documents to be mailed, or by visiting the Division's lone office in the commonwealth, located in the state capital of Richmond. For many Virginians, travel time and expense were insurmountable barriers to obtaining a birth certificate in a timely manner; DMV and VDH were tasked with removing those barriers. The partnership was given life in legislation sponsored by State Senator Steve Newman and passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 2013. The two agencies spent the next year integrating systems, establishing inventory control measures, developing policies and procedures, training, and testing in order to meet the March 1, 2014 implementation date required by the legislation.

Activities & operations

DMV's goal from the beginning of implementation was to develop the ability to securely process transactions and print birth certificates at all of its 75 customer service centers (CSC) and five mobile offices. The ability of a customer to enter any CSC or mobile office, complete a successful application and payment, and leave with a Virginia birth certificate in-hand was the driving vision behind DMV's efforts.

DMV and VDH collaborated to develop an efficient system to accomplish these goals. The central feature of the innovative solution is a secure web portal that enables a real-time data exchange between DMV's customer service application and VDH's vital records application. Through this exchange, DMV service representatives are able to receive payment, search the vital records database, accept search responses, and process the data to print on VDH secure paper in all 75 DMV CSCs and mobile offices. DMV also worked to develop policies and procedures, implement inventory controls, and train employees.

From the public's perspective, the process is streamlined and simple. Customers fill out an application and pay a \$14 fee for the birth record search at DMV. If a record match is returned from VDH, DMV prints the birth certificate and the customer leaves with the document in hand. DMV is currently able to process 93% of transactions successfully, with the remainder being forwarded to the Division of Vital Records for further research.

DMV and VDH are currently working to implement the next phase of the partnership, involving death, marriage and divorce records at DMV. Both agencies are on track for a launch date of August 3, 2015.

Costs, benefits, and transferability

Most of the costs of implementing the first phase DMV/VDH vital records partnership (birth certificates) were one-time expenditures covering hardware, programming, and training. Printing on VDH secure paper required the purchase of special trays for printers in DMV customer service centers, at a cost of approximately \$20,000. The cost of programming the new DMV birth certificate transaction and other automated work flows totaled approximately \$239,250 for 4,350 hours of work, all using in-house IT staff and resources. Employee training costs were estimated to be \$29,736. Phase two of the partnership, involving death, marriage, and divorce records, is ongoing with lower expected costs.

The success of the DMV/VDH Vital Records partnership quickly became evident shortly after launch. By September, 2014, just six months since the first Virginia birth certificate was issued at DMV, the 50,000th birth certificate came over the counter. Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe issued a news release marking the occasion. In March, 2015, at around the one-year mark, the birth certificate total topped 100,000, again drawing praise from the Governor and spurring another news release. The most recent figures show that 111,027 customers have obtained 129,323 Virginia birth certificates at DMV.

Customers pay a \$14 fee for the birth record search at DMV. \$2 of that is retained by DMV as an administrative fee, with the remainder forwarded to VDH. As a result, approximately \$259,000 in new revenue has been generated for DMV between March 2014 and May 2015.

More important than the numbers is the benefit to Virginians. Customers have experienced greatly reduced travel costs and wait times; birth certificate service in their own communities with one trip to the local DMV. Front counter employees proudly recount experiences helping military families, young parents, and others from all walks of life, all very grateful for the convenience of one-stop birth certificate service close to home. Residents of nearby states who were born in Virginia are able to drive to a DMV CSC close to the state border to purchase birth certificates. Moreover, DMV is able to assist approximately 4,300 customers each month who would previously have been turned away from DMV because they did not have a birth certificate needed to complete a DMV transaction.

Virginia DMV is the first and only state motor vehicle administration to offer vital records service at its office locations. DMV's 75 brick-and-mortar offices and five mobile offices make it an ideal place to consolidate services; DMV service is available in every county and independent city in the commonwealth. DMV also partners with other state agencies to offer service - such as hunting and fishing licenses for the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and E-ZPass transponders for the Virginia Department of Transportation – and more partnerships are in the works.

The main challenge DMV and VDH worked to overcome was ensuring the integrity and consistency of documents produced at DMV. A birth certificate is a very important "breeder document," making security a top priority. DMV developed processes to secure the paper on which the documents are printed and to calibrate its printers to produce certificates of unquestionable authenticity. These challenges require constant vigilance.

The DMV/VDH partnership was conceived and implemented in Virginia by DMV and VDH. The vital records implementation team consisted of numerous individuals from both agencies. Virginia DMV Commissioner Richard D. Holcomb was the originator of the program. His contact information is:

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The DMV/VDH vital records partnership is a model of cooperation and convenience representing the pinnacle of government service to citizens. DMV and VDH have demonstrated that it can work in any jurisdiction with the will and collaborative spirit to build a strong, secure partnership of multiple agencies. The benefit to customers cannot be overstated. Bringing government services closer to individuals, families, and communities who need them should be the goal of all who work to serve the public. That is the spirit of the DMV/VDH vital records partnership, and the ultimate measure of its success.