



Cooperative Agreement Corner



Our Cooperative Agreement with the National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems (NAPHSIS) supports activities for jurisdictions. Upcoming opportunities are provided below.

VSCP Directors Webinar

The VSCP Project Directors Webinar occurs on the second Wednesday of each month at 2 p.m. Eastern. You can forward this invitation to others in your office who might be interested, however, you cannot forward your approved registration, as each attendee must register separately. The next VSCP Project Directors Webinar will be October 9, 2024, at 2 p.m. Eastern. [Register here](#) to join the webinar.

Field Services Special Interest Group

What questions do you have regarding field services and data quality? Want to hear about best practices in training your providers? Do you need guidance on quality assurance programs? If so, the Field Services Interest Group monthly meetings can be a great resource. Hear from jurisdictions sharing their experiences and lessons learned in dealing with their internal and external partners on various field services, data quality improvement, and training topics. The Field Services Interest Group meets on the 4th Tuesday of every month at 3 p.m. Eastern. Email hq@naphsis.org to join the monthly call.

Systems Special Interest Group

Come ask your technical peers about how they grapple with adjusting their vital records systems to meet the needs of vital records, data partners, and interoperability with other systems. The Systems Special Interest Group meets on the last Thursday of every month at 3 p.m. Eastern. Email systems@naphsis.org to join the monthly call.

Statistics Interest Group

The Statistics Interest Group meets on the last Wednesday of every month at 2 p.m. Eastern. This is an opportunity to gather virtually each month to discuss topics of interest related to public health statistics. Please email us at hq@naphsis.org if you are interested in participating.

Birth Data Quality Workgroup (BDQW) and Fetal Death Subgroup

The BDQW meets on the first Thursday of every other month at 2:00 p.m. Eastern. If you are interested in assessing and improving the quality of vital statistics birth and fetal death data, contact NAPHSIS at hq@naphsis.org.

Invoicing for 2023 Data

Thank you for all your efforts in completing the 2023 data files. Now that the 2023 data files from the jurisdictions are complete, jurisdictions may submit invoices for any outstanding funds for the 2023 VSCP and 2023 NDI contracts and for any prior year outstanding funds, including any completed special projects funds. If you have any questions concerning invoices, please contact your assigned Vital Statistics Specialist.

Collaborating Office of Medical Examiners and Coroners



The [Collaborating Office of Medical Examiners and Coroners](#) (COMEC) aims to strengthen ties between medical examiners and coroners (MEC) and public health, serve as a resource for MEC offices, and assist public health researchers and practitioners engaging with MEC. COMEC was established in 2022 at CDC in recognition of the important role of medicolegal death investigation (MDI) for public health and the CDC. If you would like to receive monthly announcements from the COMEC, please email MDI@CDC.GOV.

Sharing Information about Death Certification

COMEC will exhibit at the upcoming 2024 National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) Annual Meeting (September 19 – 23). Margaret Warner will also present on trends in mortality statistics and the importance of the quality and accuracy of death certificate data. These activities will provide information to hundreds of forensic pathologists and MDIs about death certification including the importance of quality and timeliness of death certificate data.

Virtual Training Opportunities

The Medicolegal Death Investigation International Community of Practice ([MLDI ICOP](#)) is an interdisciplinary group that provides a safe collaborative environment working towards connecting and increasing knowledge of MDI systems globally. The group includes forensic pathologists, pathologists, public health officials and lawmakers from around the globe. The mission is to provide members with support, resources, and solutions. The MLDI ICOP hosts monthly Virtual Rounds with CME credits for physicians and certificates of attendance for all other disciplines. The Virtual Rounds are on the last Monday of every month. You can request membership to the community [here](#) and gain access to the monthly meetings, newsletter and learning community.

Upcoming COMEC Virtual Seminar

Title: The Medicolegal Death Investigation Interagency Working Group: Insight into Federal Coordination and Examples of Activities that Support Death Investigators

Presenter: Lucas Zarwell, Director, Office of Investigative and Forensic Sciences, National Institute of Justice

When: 11/12/24 at 3:00-3:50pm ET. [Register Here](#)

Vital Statistics Modernization Community of Practice



The NVSS [Modernization Community of Practice \(NVSS CoP\)](#) is a shared space for learning and innovation. It provides a forum for jurisdictions and their partners to collaborate in the modernization space.

The NVSS Modernization Community of Practice proudly hosted the third formal NCHS-organized testing event of 2024 on September 9-10th. The focus was on advancing jurisdictional capabilities to exchange mortality & natality data using FHIR. We are thrilled to report that 24 of 57 (or 42%) of jurisdictions participated in the testing event, with eighteen (18) jurisdictional Vital Records Offices and their respective technical partners as testers. These included Alabama, American Samoa, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York State, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

Additionally, we had the valuable participation of six (6) jurisdictions as observers, including Arizona, Connecticut, Guam, Oklahoma, Texas, and Mississippi. Their insights and feedback were instrumental in the success of the event.

Key takeaways from the testing event include:

- The screen sharing sessions conducted by Altarum on behalf of Colorado and North Dakota were extremely helpful to the observing jurisdictions regarding how the standards are interpreted and how actual FHIR messages are processed.
- SAMS and STEVE resources were readily available and on-call during the testing event, which helped resolve connectivity issues swiftly.
- No bugs requiring code fixes were identified, and there were no blocking issues with the libraries, canary, or the IGs that would prevent a VRO from completing the tests, indicating the maturity of the software libraries in supporting current workflows.
- The NVSS CoP's facilitation was punctual and orderly.
- CTE conducted a successful testing event poll that gathered input from all participating jurisdictions. CTE is excited to use this feedback to improve the community testing experiences and will share the testing results at the NVSS CoP Main Meeting in October.

NVSS has announced that the next testing event will be held on December 2-3, 2024. We encourage stakeholders to mark these dates in their calendars and email the NVSS CoP mailbox (nvssmodernization@cdc.gov) if any jurisdictions are interested in participating as observers or testers. With 100% of jurisdictions participating in one or more organized testing events, the NVSS Modernization CoP continues to push toward having at least 15 jurisdictions complete FHIR certification by the end of the year.

Jurisdictions must remember that pre-certification and certification are mandatory steps in the NVSS FHIR Certification Pathway. The overarching goal of the pre-certification process is to ensure a jurisdiction's readiness for certification. A successful pre-certification effort should provide a problem-free path through the final certification process. As a reminder, the six steps of the NVSS Certification Pathway include enhancing systems, informal testing, formal testing, pre-certification, certification, and production.

Jurisdictions are also encouraged to sign up for FHIR validation by emailing the NVSS mailbox, contacting CTE via the [#deathonfhir](#) stream on Zulip (chat.fhir.org), or selecting the self-service option on GitHub. This is a reminder that FHIR validation is optional but highly recommended as a precursor to pre-certification. The main objective for FHIR validation is to test the jurisdiction's ability to analyze the structure of FHIR messaging and produce FHIR records according to the VRDR IG standard.

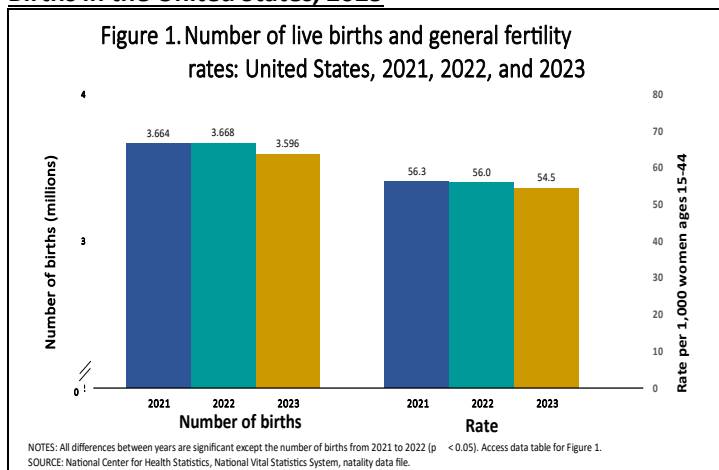
NVSS recommends jurisdictions use our peer-to-peer connection for announcements that interest the community of

practice, such as job vacancies and upcoming conferences. Please feel free to send them to the NVSS mailbox. Main CoP meetings and the technical support meeting recordings can be found in the meeting proceedings area on the NVSS Modernization Community of Practice SharePoint site. Users can also click the 'quick links' option to access the certification and pre-certification documents.

CTE encourages all jurisdictions to post any technical questions related to the Mortality workflow on the #DeathonFhir stream in the Zulip chat. If you post an issue to Zulip, please include as much relevant information as possible, including any attachments. For any programmatic problems, like needing assistance with your SAMs account, please email nvssmodernization@cdc.gov. The NVSS Modernization Community of Practice Weekly Office Hours meeting minutes are posted weekly on the Zulip NVSS CoP Office Hours stream.

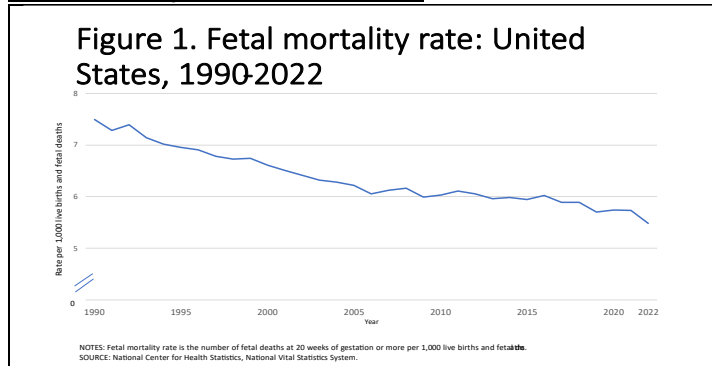
Special thanks to technical partners MITRE, Ruvos, NAPHSIS, and CTE for their ongoing collaboration in the modernization efforts. Their valuable contributions have been instrumental in the success of our recurring meetings and organized testing events.

[Notable Publications/Data Briefs](#) **Births in the United States, 2023**



This report was published in August 2024 and can be found at this [link](#). It shows that the number of births in the United States declined 2% from 2022 to 2023 to 3,664,292. The general fertility rate declined 3% in 2023 to 54.5 births per 1,000 females ages 15–44. Birth rates declined for females ages 15–19 (4%), 15-17 (2%), and 18-19 (5%), from 2022 to 2023. The percentage of mothers receiving prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy declined 1% from 2022 to 2023 while the percentage of mothers with no prenatal care increased 5%. The preterm birth rate was essentially unchanged at 10.41% in 2023 but the rate of early term births rose 2% to 29.84% of all births.

Fetal Mortality: United States, 2022



This report was published in August 2024 and can be found at this [link](#). It shows a total of 20,202 fetal deaths at 20 weeks of gestation or more were reported in the United States in 2022. The 2022 U.S. fetal mortality rate was 5.48 fetal deaths at 20 weeks of gestation or more per 1,000 live births and fetal deaths, 4% lower than in 2021 (5.73) and a new historic low for the United States. The fetal mortality rate in 2022 for deaths occurring at 20–27 weeks of gestation was 2.79, a 5% decline from 2021 (2.95). For deaths occurring at 28 weeks of gestation or more, the rate in 2022 was 2.71, a 3% decline from 2021 (2.80). In 2022, the fetal mortality rate was highest for non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (10.36) and Black females (10.05) and lowest for Asian females (3.70). Five selected causes accounted for 90.0% of fetal deaths in the 43-state and District of Columbia reporting area.

Vital Staff Spotlights

Jurisdictions may add as many names as they would like to our NCHS Newsletter mailing list! Just send a note to George Tolson at gct1@cdc.gov.

We received word that Division of Vital Statistics colleague Robert Bilgrad passed away in August 2024. Those of us who knew Robert will remember that he was instrumental in establishing and leading the operation of the National Death Index (NDI) for many years.

Jean Luka departed her position as Acting State Registrar in Hawaii.

Grace Vo was appointed State Registrar in Hawaii.

Marsha Trump was appointed VSCP Project Director in Oregon.

Katina Lugo was appointed VSCP Project Director in Arizona.

Roseann Giorgianni departed her position as State Registrar and VSCP Project Director in Rhode Island.

[Click here for previous newsletter issues](#)