



Rhode Island Vital Events Registration System (RIVERS) Frequently Asked Questions for Medical Certifiers

November 1, 2022

General Information

What is an EDRS?

EDRS is an Electronic Death Registration System. An EDRS is a web-based application used to electronically register and record deaths that occur in Rhode Island. In Rhode Island, we call the EDRS RIVERS.

Why did the state move to an electronic system?

Rhode Island was one of only four states that did not enter death records electronically. RIVERS allows medical certifiers to complete death records electronically. This system was implemented to support the national effort for reporting timely and accurate data to the National Center for Health Statistics.

What are the benefits of RIVERS?

RIVERS:

- Eliminate paper records;
- Allows medical certifiers and funeral directors to complete records electronically;
- Allows certifiers to complete death records using mobile technology (phone, tablet, etc.);
- Provides better quality data and timely data reporting; and
- Enables a faster turnaround for completion of the death record.

When did the State start working on the transition to RIVERS?

The State started working to implement RIVERS in April 2021, and communications about the transition were emailed to all stakeholders, including healthcare facilities, medical certifiers, and funeral homes. Information and training resources were also posted on RIDOH's website. RIDOH's email distribution list was created using contact information provided to RIDOH by licensees and/or facilities. Any licensee or facility that had not provided a current email may not have received communications.

Is the RIVERS system for clinicians only?

No, the RIVERS system death module is for use by facilities and funeral homes.

Where can I find training guides?

The following training guides and videos are available on RIDOH's website

1. Medical Certifier training video: <https://youtu.be/qORAZlKsbdo>
2. Fetal Death Certifier training guide: <https://health.ri.gov/publications/guidelines/RIVERS-Fetal-Death-Facility-User-Guide.pdf>
3. Birth Module training video: <https://health.ri.gov/records/#>
4. Death Module training guide: <https://health.ri.gov/publications/guidelines/RIVERS-Death-Medical-Certifier-Training-Guide.pdf>
5. Printer Setup Instructions <https://health.ri.gov/publications/instructions/RIVERS-Printer-Setup.pdf>

Is there a RIVERS help desk?

Yes, the RIDOH RIVERS help desk is available 24 hours a day. In the middle of the [RIVERS home page](#), click on **REPORT RIVERS ISSUE(S)** or call 866-694-0571 (press 1 for support)

What are the technical requirements for RIVERS?

- RIVERS is accessible through web pages on Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, Safari, and Edge.
- Laptops, computers, mobile devices, and tablet must use Safari N-1, Chrome. Android devices must use the browser N-1 or greater.
- Users must have an internet connection and a widely used JavaScript enabled standard web browser.
- Users must have Adobe Acrobat Reader to access the pdf versions of forms and letters, and they must have Excel for accessing and running reports.

How do I sign up to be a user in RIVERS?

New users can enroll in RIVERS by completing the [New User Enrollment Form](#). Once it is approved, the user will receive an email from the RIVERS system, noreply@RIhostingby-genesis.com. The email contains a username, password, and PIN. **Do not share your username, password, or PIN for this government system.**

Can I use my personal email for my contact information in RIVERS?

RIDOH recommends that the email you use in RIVERS is a work email address because using this system contains HIPAA protected information, and notifications you receive may contain decedent names and date of death.

How do we know if we are enrolled?

When you are successfully enrolled, you will receive an email notification with your user name, password, and a link to the RIVERS system. You will then be able to log into the system using that information.

Will certifiers be required to have an online presence to use the RIVERS system?

Yes, all users, including certifiers, will be assigned a user name and password to access the system. If a certifier is not on the list of users for the system, it means they have not enrolled yet. To enroll in the system, complete the [New User Enrollment Form](#).

I forgot my password. How can I recover it?

Any users can reset their own password by selecting the *Forgot Password?* link on the top right corner of the [home page of the RIVERS system](#).

I forgot my username. How can I recover it?

To recover a username, call 866-694-0571, and press 1 for support. You also can email rivershelp@genesisinfo.com

What do I do if my facility affiliation or contact information changes?

If you have any changes in your facility affiliation or contact information, email updated information to doh.riversassistance@health.ri.gov.

What should I do if, in a crisis situation, I am working at another facility?

Any changes or updates to a facility affiliation or contact information should be emailed to doh.riversassistance@health.ri.gov.

Is there an interface between RIVERS and EPIC?

No, there is only an interface between EPIC and the Office of State Medical Examiners case management system. The State, Lifespan, and Care New England are continuing discussions about an interface between RIVERS and EPIC. Any update will be shared with users via RIDOH's website.

Death Module

Do certifiers have to enter the actual diagnoses?

Yes, the National center for Health Statistics (NCHS) does not allow use of a drop-down list of ICD-10 codes for the cause of death. Jurisdictions are required to enter and report that actual diagnosis, and then NCHS assigns an ICD-10 code for the cause of death.

What if a decedent is not identified (they are identified only as Jane Doe or John Doe)?

If the decedent name is unknown, it should be reported as *Unknown* so a death record can be created and certified. The 2003 revision of the US Standard Certificate of Death does not permit the use of John Doe or Jane Doe as a name for an unidentified decedent. Medical records staff can update demographic information on the medical tabs. The funeral director will complete the demographic information in the demographic tabs of the record.

What if the certifier does not complete the death record in a timely manner?

If a certifier is not completing the death record in a timely manner, you can send the medical certifier a reminder through RIVERS. If the certifier does not complete the death record after receiving a reminder to do so, email the State Office of Vital Records' Help Desk at DOH.RIVERSAssistance@health.ri.gov.

Will paper records be accepted?

No, as of February 1, 2022, RIDOH stopped accepting paper records for death and fetal death reporting.

Can providers initiate a record?

Yes, providers and funeral home directors can initiate a death record.

Can providers print a death certificate from the system?

No, providers can only print a medical abstract from the system.

What if a provider certified and approved the burial transit permit and did not designate a funeral home?

If there is no funeral home designated, the certification of the record will not be affected. Funeral home designation can happen after the certification. If a certifier cannot designate a funeral director, the State can designate the funeral home, or the funeral home can create the death record independently.

Does the funeral home information need to be entered before a certificate is certified?

No, the funeral home information is not required for medical certification.

What is the difference between a pronouncer and a certifier? What if the pronouncer and certifier do not know each other?

A pronouncer is the person who declared the death. The certifier is the person who is determining the cause of death and certifying to the facts of the death. A facility user, such as medical records staff, or facility administrator can enter the information for the pronouncer if the certifier does not know that information.

Who can pronounce a death in Rhode Island?

[Rhode Island law](#) requires physicians, as defined by the *Rules and Regulations Governing Vital Records*, to sign death certificates, but it does not address who can pronounce a death. Therefore, it is the policy of the Department of Health that, with respect to the expected death of a person who is receiving nursing services in the home or for whom the attending physicians has included documentation of an expected death in the patient's medical record, a registered nurse may pronounce death (determine biological death) but must then notify the attending physician.

Who can certify a death in Rhode Island?

In Rhode Island, a physician (MD or DO), a nurse practitioner, or a physician assistant who is licensed in the State of Rhode Island can certify a death certificate.

Are the pronouncing and attending physician sections mandatory, even if it is the same provider?

Yes, the sections for pronouncing physician and attending physician are mandatory. RIVERS does provide a drop-down list of all licensed certifiers.

Does the funeral director need to notify the Social Security Administration?

No, the funeral director does not need to notify the Social Security Administration. The RIVERS system uses OVS2, an online verification system that is linked to the Social Security Administration. There is no longer a need to complete the 721 form.

Does the funeral director need to report total deaths to RIDOH each month?

No, the funeral director no longer needs to submit monthly death total to RIDOH. All of this data is captured in the RIVERS system.

What if there is no date of disposition for cremation?

If the date of disposition is unknown, you can enter ?.

Does the physician have to approve the burial transit permit?

If the death record is certified, the burial transit permit does not need a separate approval process. If the death record is not certified, the physician can approve the burial transit permit prior to certification.

Once we release the record, can we order additional certified copies? If not, how can we request more certified copies?

After a record has been released, additional certified copies can be obtained at any city or town hall in Rhode Island either in person or by mail. Additional certified copies can also be requested by mail from the State Office of Vital Records.

At a hospice facility, will the physician need to fill this out in real time for every patient who dies overnight so that the body can be released?

No, a hospice facility can proceed as usual and the physician can complete the death certificate when they are notified.

Should referrals to the Office of State Medical Examiners for applicable cases still be called in or will that be done online?

Facilities should continue to call in referrals to the Office of State Medical Examiners for applicable cases.

Will we get an alert when the medical examiner has reviewed the record?

If the medical examiner accepts or rejects a record, all stakeholders will automatically be notified by the RIVERS system. If the medical examiner redesignates the record back to the facility after it is reviewed, the facility will receive an email notification that the record has been redesignated and is waiting to be accepted.

Can we edit a record before it is released?

If you need to make changes to a record after it has been certified but before it is released, the record can be de-certified by an authorized user. Once it has been de-certified, it will be available to make the changes and re-certified.

How quickly will the Office of State Medical Examiner accept the case?

The Office reviews cases every day and processes cases as efficiently as possible.