



California Department of Public Health Logo

Affidavit To Amend A Death Record

Amending a Death Certificate

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Center for Health Statistics and Informatics – Vital Records

Upon request, this document will be made available in Braille, large print, and audiocassette or computer disk. To obtain a copy in one of these alternate formats, please call or write:

California Department of Public Health
Vital Records - M.S. 5103
P.O. Box 997410
Sacramento, CA 95899-7410
Telephone: (916) 445-2684
California Relay: 711/1-800-735-2929
Website address www.CDPH.CA.GOV

Amending a Death Certificate

What information can be changed with an amendment?

Amendments are used to correct **errors** on the death certificate. Documentation supporting the correction may be requested and not returned. Keep copies of documents submitted.

The VS 24 form can be used to:

- Correct spelling errors.
- Add information not known at the time of death.
- Add an “AKA” (“also known as”) to decedent’s name.
- Correct most items on the certificate, except those noted below.

The VS 24 form cannot be used to:

- Change the informant that is listed on the original death certificate unless the form includes signatures of the informant listed on the death certificate and the new informant.
- Correct the date, time, place, or cause of death (items 7, 8, 105, and 107) – this information can only be changed by the certifying or attending physician, coroner, or medical examiner via the Physician/Coroner’s Amendment (VS 24A form).

What is the fee to amend a death certificate?

Within One Year of the Death:

- There is no fee to amend a record within one year of the date of the death (***but you do not get a copy of the amended record***)
- .If you want a Certified Copy of the amended record, there is a \$21 fee for each copy.

If the Death Occurred More Than One Year Ago:

- There is a \$23 fee, which includes one Certified Copy of the amended record.
- Additional copies are \$21.

Fees should be paid by check or money order payable to **CDPH Vital Records**. International money orders for out-of-country requests should be payable in U.S. dollars.

Amending a Death Certificate

Please Note

If it is within the first year of death and you do not want a Certified Copy, your request will be processed and you will not receive any further contact from the California Department of Public Health – Vital Records (CDPH-VR) office. A copy of the amended record will be provided to the local county recorder.

Once CDPH-VR completes the amendment (the processing time is listed at the end of this pamphlet), CDPH-VR will send a copy of the amended record to the local county recorder so they can update their records.

What do I submit to amend a death certificate?

If you ARE requesting an authorized Certified Copy of the amended death certificate, you need to submit the following:

- Completed Affidavit to Amend a Record, VS 24 form with original signatures (including back side).
- Photocopy of the current death certificate. (Although this item is ***not required***, it would help CDPH-VR identify the exact record to be amended).
- Signed and notarized Sworn Statement.
- Appropriate fee.

If you ARE requesting an informational Certified Copy of the amended death certificate, you need to submit the following:

- Completed Affidavit to Amend a Record, VS 24 form with original signatures (including back side).
- Photocopy of the current death certificate. (Although this item is ***not required***, it would help CDPH-VR identify the exact record to be amended).
- No Sworn Statement is necessary.
- Appropriate fee.

If you do not require a copy of the amended death certificate AND it is within one year of the date of death, you only need to submit the following:

- Completed Affidavit to Amend a Record, VS 24 form with original signatures.
- Photocopy of the current death certificate. (Although this item is ***not required***, it would help CDPH-VR identify the exact record to be amended).

Mail these items to the CDPH-VR office using the address on the front of this pamphlet. If any required items are not included, your request will be returned to you for correction.

Amending a Death Certificate

Why do I need a Sworn Statement?

Effective July 1, 2003, the law requires that only an authorized person (as defined by Health and Safety Code 103526 (c)) may receive a Certified Copy of a birth or death record. To help protect against identity theft, you must complete and submit a signed, notarized Sworn Statement declaring under penalty of perjury that you are authorized by law to receive an authorized Certified Copy. The sworn statement form is available at the CDPH website.

When do I need to submit a Sworn Statement?

If you are requesting an authorized Certified Copy of the amended record, you must complete and submit a notarized sworn statement.

Where can I get the VS 24 form?

Due to the high volume of CDPH-VR telephone calls, the Internet is usually the faster way to obtain the VS 24 form. You may:

- [Download a fillable form](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/pubsforms/forms/CtrldForms/VS24.pdf) at: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/pubsforms/forms/CtrldForms/VS24.pdf>. Instructions for completing the PDF fillable form can be found at the above link.
- [For the Physician/Coroner's Amendment](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/pubsforms/forms/CtrldForms/VS24a.pdf), VS 24A form: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/pubsforms/forms/CtrldForms/VS24a.pdf>.
- [Order paper forms](https://apps.cdph.ca.gov/AutoForm2/default.aspx?af=1184) electronically to be mailed to you at: <https://apps.cdph.ca.gov/AutoForm2/default.aspx?af=1184>.

You may also:

- Call the Customer Service Unit at (916) 445-2684.
- Contact the County Recorder or County Health Department in any California county.

Amending a Death Certificate

How do I complete the VS 24 form?

A sample of what a completed form should look like is attached if you obtained a printed pamphlet from CDPH-VR:

PART I:

Complete the information exactly as it appears on the current death certificate.

Note: If you need a copy of the current death certificate to complete this section, you can [download a fillable application](#) form for a certified copy at the CDPH website, or you may obtain a paper form in the same manner as noted in the previous section. Complete and submit the application, notarized Sworn Statement, and \$21 fee to the CDPH-VR office.

PART II:

- **Item 8:** Enter the item number from the current death certificate that needs to be corrected. List only one item per line.
- **Item 9:** Enter the *incorrect* information **as it appears** on the current death certificate.
- **Item 10:** Enter the *correct* information **as it should appear** on the death certificate.
- **Item 11:** Briefly state why the original information was not correct.

Who may sign supporting affidavits?

- Two persons having knowledge of the facts must complete the supporting affidavits. See next section for additional information. The signed affidavits must be included on the bottom of the VS 24 form and not as a separate document.
- **Two signatures are required.**

Amending a Death Certificate

Are there situations where specific persons must sign the affidavits?

Yes.

When correcting marital status (item 12), or when adding or changing a surviving spouse (items 28-30):

- Both the informant who is listed on the death certificate and the surviving spouse must sign the affidavit.
- If either the informant or the surviving spouse refuses to sign the affidavit, CDPH-VR can correct the marital information if you provide a **certified copy** of a court order establishing the decedent's marital status at the time of his or her death. The court order should be mailed to the CDPH-VR office with the affidavit signed by two persons with knowledge of the facts.

When correcting items 26 or 27 (name, relationship, or mailing address of the informant):

- The original informant must sign the affidavit.

When changing item 26 (informant name/relationship) from "under investigation" status to include an informant:

- The coroner or medical examiner must sign the affidavit.

When correcting the date, time, place, or cause of death:

- Only the certifying or attending physician, coroner, or medical examiner can amend these items, by completing the Physician/Coroner's Amendment, VS 24A form. Please see prior page for information on obtaining an original form.

Amending a Death Certificate

What makes a VS 24 form “acceptable?”

Important Information

Death certificates are legal documents that must hold up in any court, unchallenged as to their accuracy and reliability.

Because the amendment you submit becomes an actual part of this legal document, it must adhere to strict guidelines:

- Every item on the amendment must be completed.
- The form must be completed using the 26 alphabetical characters of the English language.
- Appropriate punctuation includes: a hyphen such as in “Smith-Jones,” an apostrophe as in “O’Hare,” a period as used with “Jr.,” and a comma as with “Smith, Jr.”
- Unacceptable entries include: drawings, pictures, or symbols, or accents, or marks added to a letter to indicate pronunciation or to distinguish it in some way, such as with è, ñ, ē, or ç.
- Because the amendment form becomes part of the official record, every word and letter must be extremely clear and legible. ***Typing entries on the form ensures that the information is interpreted clearly.***
- If you are completing the downloadable amendment form, print on standard 8½” x 11” letter size, plain white paper, using black ink only, at 100% scale.
- If you are not able to type the amendment form, it is extremely important that you take the extra time to print ***very clearly and legibly***. Documents that are not legible will be returned to you to complete again.
- ***Only black ink is acceptable*** (per Health and Safety Code Section 102125).
- ***There cannot be any erasures, whiteout, alterations, or extraneous markings.***

How long will it take to process the amendment?

The [processing time](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/birthdeathmar/Pages/ProcessingTimes.aspx) for death amendments can be located on the CDPH-VR website at: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/birthdeathmar/Pages/ProcessingTimes.aspx>

Amending a Death Certificate

Once I file the amendment, what happens to the original record?

- The original record remains unchanged, and the amendment becomes page 2 of the death certificate - making it a two-page document (per Health and Safety Code Sections 102140 and 103255).
- Anyone receiving a copy after the amendment is applied will receive a copy of both documents.

What if I still have questions?

If you have read this pamphlet thoroughly and still have questions that were not answered, please call the Customer Service Unit at (916) 445-2684. If you are checking the status of your request, please wait until after the processing time has passed before contacting CDPH-VR.