

Verification of Pregnancy Checkbox Information

Instructions for Medical Certifiers



What am I being asked to do, and why?

In the past, there had been underreporting of maternal deaths on death certificates because medical certifiers often did not provide enough information in the cause of death fields to identify a death as related to pregnancy. To help address this underreporting, a checkbox for collecting information on pregnancy status in the year preceding death was added to the U.S. Standard Certificate of Death in 2003. While the checkbox improved the identification of maternal deaths, a recent study conducted by the CDC National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) found that there are instances where medical certifiers inadvertently mark the wrong checkbox, which results in records being counted as maternal deaths when they are not. To identify and correct these errors, vital records offices are being asked to verify checkbox responses on certain death records, which is why you are receiving this request. This is not to say that the information that you initially reported is incorrect--you are only being asked to verify that you selected the checkbox that you intended to mark. In the event that you identify an error, please amend the record with your vital records office so updated information can be provided to NCHS.

Why is it important to identify and correct pregnancy checkbox errors?

Since the annual count of maternal deaths is relatively small, correcting even a few errors can impact the national maternal mortality rate, and it can make a large difference in the rate for your jurisdiction. It clearly benefits both your jurisdiction and the nation as a whole to ensure that inflated maternal mortality rates are not being reported due to unintended errors on death records.

Where can I find more information on NCHS-related maternal mortality reports and activities?

Links to published reports, provisional data, and information on access to data files are available on NCHS's [Maternal Mortality](#) webpage. This webpage also includes links to reports on changes in data methods and the implementation of new coding methods, and responses to frequently asked questions.

