



Protecting, maintaining and improving the health of all Minnesotans

BIRTH RECORDS

August 2003

More than 85 standing requests for public birth lists have been received at the Minnesota Department of Health since the availability of such lists was announced. In previous years, prior to the implementation of our new vital records paperless birth system, more choices were available for file formats and frequency of data distribution. It is now necessary to produce all school district files on a monthly basis for ease of operation and administrative purposes. The file format will also be limited to one ASCII comma-delimited text format which can be easily imported into data base tables or spreadsheets. The file will be sent as an e-mail attachment to a designated contact individual.

The cost of an initial request is \$30.00 and subsequent runs are \$15.00 per month. We understand that this charge may be a burden on your budgets, however it is necessary to cover our costs. If you are interested in another option, a "Resident Birth Report" can be produced at your county's local registrar's office. It is a paper report which can include up to one calendar year's births in one run, or it may be done on a monthly basis. The cost of this report is \$15 per run, regardless of the number of months (up to one year) reported. One disadvantage to this report is that it is specific to county of residence (not zip code) and it is sorted by birth date. Another disadvantage is that this is a paper report, and data contained would have to be manually entered into any electronic files kept at your site.

The monthly lists produced through our system are generated approximately one to two months after the birth events. While this early release of births is valuable for early referrals, it is important to keep in mind the risk of contacting parents whose baby has died. Please take special notice of the limitations section below which pertains to Infant Deaths.

To meet mailing needs and to facilitate timely responses to requests for these data for individual school districts, the following standard list of data items was developed and routinely appears on the files:

Baby's Name, Baby's Gender, Birth Date, Mother's Name, Father's Name, Mailing Address Street, Mailing Address City, State and Zip, County of Residence, City of Residence, Reference Number

Please note the following limitations of the birth data:

1. Confidential data

Births to unmarried parents are classified as confidential unless designated as public by the mother. About 20% (13,000) of the births in Minnesota are to parents who are not married. Less than 60% (7,500) of those records are designated as public by the mother. The data you receive will not include confidential birth data;

2. Infant Deaths

It is very important to note that these birth data may include babies who have died since birth. Currently, the Minnesota Department of Health does manual matches between infant death records and birth records. However, because you will be receiving these data within one to two months of the birth, these matches will not have occurred and records for babies who have died may be on the file you receive. We know from past experience that a letter addressed personally to a mom or dad of a baby who has died may be a very emotional and distressing thing. We strongly suggest using a generic addressee, such as "Household" or "Resident" when you mail to the addresses provided with these birth data;

3. Provisional data

Because you will be receiving the data soon after the birth, you must consider the data to be provisional. Birth records that are less than a year old are frequently subject to changes and corrections. While limiting the data items to the standard set listed above reduces the numbers of changes and corrections that may occur after you receive the birth data, it cannot eliminate them entirely; and

4. School District Boundaries

Birth data are not collected or coded by school district. To request data that are applicable to your district, identify zip codes included within the boundaries of your school district in your request. The Minnesota Department of Health will supply addresses as well as county and city of residence so that you may sort the list appropriately and delete unwanted records.

If you are interested in receiving an electronic file listing births for your district, please supply the following information:

1. Zip codes to be selected and School District Number
2. Name of Contact Person: Please include e-mail address and telephone number
3. Billing address: Please note that no prepayment is necessary as invoices will be sent quarterly.

Direct your requests to: **Cheri Denardo**
Data Handling and Reporting Unit
Office of the State Registrar
Center for Health Statistics
Minnesota Department of Health
P.O. Box 9441
Minneapolis, MN 55440-9441

Requests may also be sent via e-mail to mchs-sch@health.state.mn.us

Questions may be directed to: **Cheri Denardo (612)676-5916**
or
Linda Salkowicz (612)676-5565