

Evaluation of Access to Vital Records at Parish Health Units

In response to

SCR 11

of the 2016 Regular Legislative Session

Louisiana Department of Health

Office of Public Health

Bureau of Vital Records and Statistics

October 1, 2016

Executive Summary

In response to Senate Concurrent Resolution 11 of the 2016 Regular Legislative Session, this report evaluates the resources needed to increase access to vital records at public health units. The report outlines two proposals that would restore public access to vital records from Parish Health Units. The first proposal would provide the public availability in each Parish, while the second proposal would provide for a geographically-distributed service center model.

As a result of the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) (formerly DHH) budget reductions, eight LDH service centers were closed in September 2012. These service centers provided walk-in services to the public for birth and death records. Since September 2012, nine electronic kiosks have been placed in service center locations to provide citizens with increased ability to request a Louisiana birth, death, or Orleans marriage record. These kiosks are furnished by VitalChek, a third-party company, at no cost to the State of Louisiana. The customer is charged a four dollar convenience fee for placing the order through the kiosk. In addition, walk-in service for the public remains available from the Vital Records Office located in New Orleans as well as from participating Louisiana Clerks of Court.

Clerks of Court can choose to participate in vital record issuance. If a customer chooses this option, the customer is charged an additional \$19 fee. Vital Records provides each Clerk's office with banknote paper, technical support, updating of archived records, field training, and access to Louisiana Electronic Event Registration System (LEERS). Vital Records receives the same fee as the program would have received if it had been issued to the customer directly by Vital Records. Currently, there are 47 Clerk of Court locations statewide that issue birth records from LEERS (in 42 parishes). An additional 27 locations in 22 parishes currently issue death certificates (for deaths occurring since July 2012). Vital Records receives the full statutory payment for all vital records sold at these locations. Among the service center locations that were eliminated in health units, all currently have a Clerk of Court issuing records in that Parish, ensuring that access to records is maintained. The most recently added Clerk of Court is East Baton Rouge Parish in September 2016.

Budget reductions over the past six years have resulted in a reduction of staff and without additional funding it would be impossible to staff the eight service center sites that were eliminated in 2012. The restoration of vital record issuance at these sites would require two new full-time employees devoted entirely to issuance (not having any health unit duties), including salary and related benefits, at each location for a total of 16 new positions. Additional computer stations and printers would need to be purchased and devoted entirely to record issuance. Operating under the assumption that vital records are purchased as needed, these records are still being purchased through other avenues such as Clerks of Court and mail order. As a result, any expansion of walk-in services would not result in a significant increase of revenue.

Historical Parish Health Unit Vital Record Issuance

At the time of the 2012 budget reduction, there were eight health unit service centers statewide plus walk-in services at the vital records office in New Orleans. These locations were in East Baton Rouge, Tangipahoa, Lafourche, Lafayette, Calcasieu, Rapides, Ouachita, and Caddo Parishes, and the central office in Orleans Parish. In FY11, prior to the budget reduction and subsequent closure of all service centers, Jefferson Parish's service center was closed in response to a midyear budget reduction and due to its proximity to the Orleans central office location. Vital Records Service Centers issued 190,504 certified copies of birth certificates, birth cards, and death certificates during FY2012.

FY12 Services and Fee Collections by Vital Records Service Centers				
Vital Records Service Center	Certified Copies		Fees Collected	
	Avg. Certified Copies Issued Per Month	FY12 Number of Certified Copies Issued	Avg. Fees Collected per Month	FY12 Fees Collected
Reg. 2 Service Center - East Baton Rouge	3,520	42,236	\$36,259.83	\$435,118.00
Reg. 3 Service Center - Lafourche	1,110	13,316	\$10,961.33	\$131,536.00
Reg. 4 Service Center - Lafayette	2,120	25,442	\$22,041.17	\$264,494.00
Reg. 5 Service Center - Calcasieu	1,963	23,558	\$19,289.33	\$231,472.00
Reg. 6 Service Center - Rapides	1,506	18,066	\$15,552.50	\$186,630.00
Reg. 7 Service Center - Caddo	3,034	36,406	\$29,847.00	\$358,164.00
Reg. 8 Service Center - Ouachita	1,454	17,448	\$14,640.67	\$175,688.00
Reg. 9 Service Center - Tangipahoa	1,169	14,032	\$12,016.17	\$144,194.00
SERVICE CENTER TOTAL	15,875	190,504	\$160,608.00	\$1,927,296.00

FY12 Service Types Provided by Service Centers					
Service Center	Certified Birth Certificates Issued	Certified Birth Cards Issued	Certified Initial Death Certificates Issued*	Certified Death Certificates Issued	Certified Orleans Marriage Certificates Issued*
Reg. 2 Service Center - East Baton Rouge	15,716	4,646	2,776	19,048	50
Reg. 3 Service Center - Lafourche	4,136	1,160	1,108	6,902	10
Reg. 4 Service Center - Lafayette	9,408	4,012	1,550	10,466	6
Reg. 5 Service Center - Calcasieu	7,398	2,126	1,842	12,180	12
Reg. 6 Service Center - Rapides	6,662	2,364	1,370	7,664	6
Reg. 7 Service Center - Caddo	11,820	2,096	3,058	19,432	0
Reg. 8 Service Center - Ouachita	5,922	2,194	1,400	7,928	4
Reg. 9 Service Center - Tangipahoa	5,138	1,646	1,144	6,080	24
SERVICE CENTER TOTAL	66,200	20,244	14,248	89,700	112

*Vital Records Central Office issued marriage licenses to the public and issued certified copies of those issued licenses to the public

The budget reduction estimate provided at the time of the eight Service Center closures was approximately **\$545,000** (not including previous reduction from closure of the Marrero Service Center in Jefferson Parish).

FY16 Service Types Provided by Clerks of Court			
Clerk of Court Location	Certified Birth Certificates Issued	Certified Birth Cards Issued	Certified Death Certificates Issued
East Feliciana Parish Clerk of Court	7,644	154	107
Lafourche Parish Clerk of Court	1,905	735	73
Lafayette Parish Clerk of Court	10,441	2,900	138
Calcasieu Parish Clerk of Court	8,418	1,324	158
Rapides Parish Clerk of Court	4,663	1,187	214
Caddo Parish Clerk of Court*	3,047	0	0
Ouachita Parish Clerk of Court	6,969	923	192
Tangipahoa Parish Clerk of Court	5,254	449	148
CLERK OF COURT TOTAL	48,341	7,672	1,030

* Location began issuing January 2016

Above, FY16 data from Clerks of Court shows that record issuance volume remains high and comparable to the levels provided prior to the closure of the Service Centers, with the exception of Region 2 where there has been a decrease in vital records issued. Certified death certificates continue to be printed at each local Parish Health Unit for funeral homes, so Clerk of Court numbers represent reissued death certificates only. None of these locations were issuing records at the time of the Service Center closures in 2012.

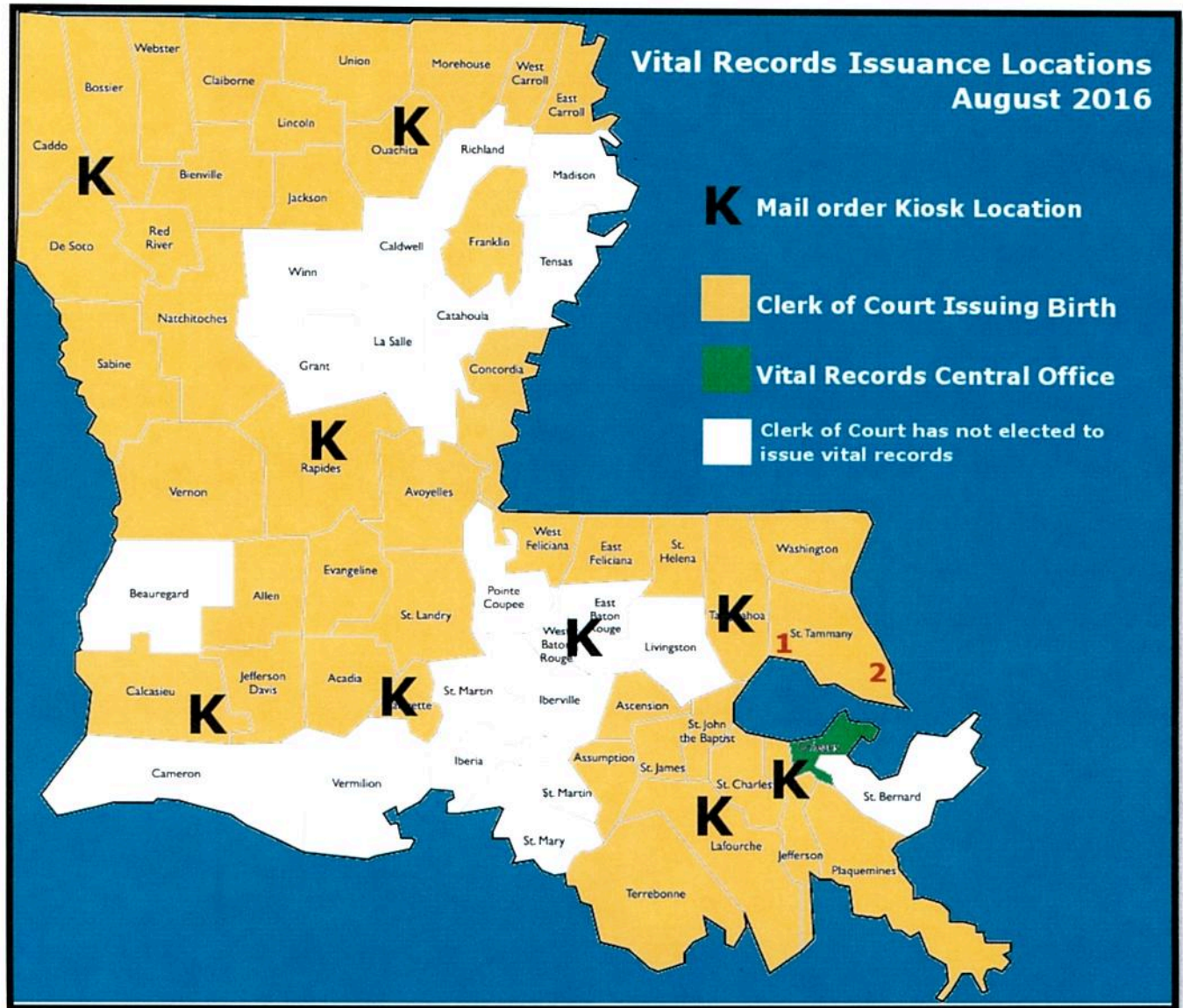
Service Types Provided by Vital Records Front Counter			
Fiscal Year	Certified Birth Certificates Issued	Certified Birth Cards Issued	Certified Death Certificates Issued
Front Counter FY2012	18,687	6,475	3,035
Front Counter FY2016	24,959	5,308	5,038

Above, comparisons of FY12 and FY16 data for the Vital Records walk-in services in New Orleans show a slight increase in volume pre- and post-closure of the issuance centers.

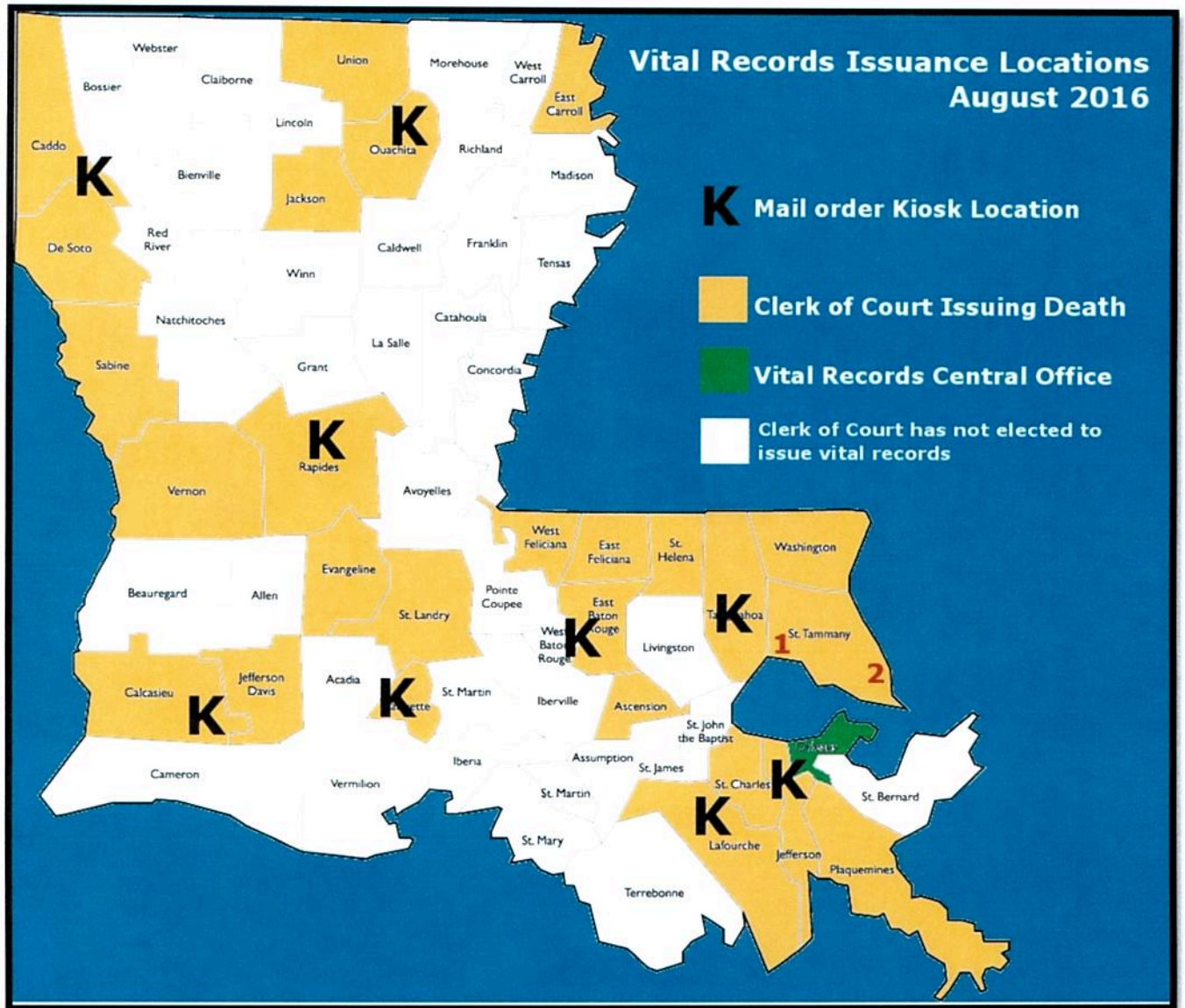
Service Types Provided by Vital Records Central Office*			
Fiscal Year	Certified Birth Certificates Issued	Certified Birth Cards Issued	Certified Death Certificates Issued
Central Office FY2012*	61,989	5,531	72,700
Central Office FY2016*	69,167	4,340	74,128

*excludes Vital Records Front Counter

Vital Records Issuance Location Map – Birth Certificates



Vital Records Issuance Location Map – Death Certificates



Proposals to Restore Parish Health Unit Issuance of Vital Records

In response to the resolution of the Senate, this report will outline two proposals that would restore public access to vital records from Parish Health Units - one proposal for availability in each Parish and one proposal for a geographically-distributed service center model.

Option 1: Full Parish Availability – 63 Parishes (Orleans Parish excluded)

Required Items	Unit Cost	Total Cost
1 TO (Administrative Coordinator 3), Salary, and Benefits	\$35,000	\$2,205,000
1 TO (Administrative Coordinator 3), Salary, and Benefits	\$35,000	\$2,205,000
Computer/Printer	\$1,000	\$63,000
Total		\$4,473,000

Option 2: Regional Service Centers – 8 Parishes

Required Items	Unit Cost	Total Cost
1 TO (Administrative Coordinator 3), Salary, and Benefits	\$35,000	\$280,000
1 TO (Administrative Coordinator 3), Salary, and Benefits	\$35,000	\$280,000
Computer/Printer	\$1,000	\$8,000
Total		\$568,000

The above proposals assume hiring issuance employees at each Parish Health Unit at the Administrative Coordinator 3 level (previous service center employees ranged in level from Administrative Coordinator 3 up to Administrative Coordinator 5). The \$35,000 salary/benefit level is taken from the low end of that position's salary range. Two positions would be needed at each health unit to account for volume as well as to provide backup that would be required if either employee was on annual or sick leave. Vital record issuance would require a minimum of one dedicated computer and printer per location.

Not taken into account in these figures is the availability of a suitable location within each Parish Health Unit to serve customers, including the ability to store money, application documents (required to be retained for up to four years), and a common waiting area for customers. A review of the available facilities would need to be conducted and in some cases, remodeling of available space or identification of new space may be necessary.