

## DIVISION OF VITAL RECORDS

Geneva G. Sparks, *Chief*

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The Division of Vital Records was organized in 1912 as the Bureau of Vital Statistics. In 1951, it was reformed as the Division of Vital Records and Statistics and, in 1967, as the Division of Vital Records under the Bureau of Analysis and Records. In 1969, the Division was placed under the Center for Health Statistics. In 1988, the Division was separated from Health Statistics.

The Division provides copies of certified birth, death, marriage and annulment certificates. All births, deaths, marriages, and divorces that occur in the State are registered. Copies of birth, death and marriage records are issued to authorized persons for a fee of \$3.00 per copy (checks to be made payable to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene).

*Birth and Death Records.* The Division has birth and death records for Baltimore City from January 1, 1875, and for the twenty-three counties of Maryland from August 1898. Copies of birth records prior to 1920, and death records prior to 1974 also are available from the State Archives.

*Marriage and Divorce Records.* State marriage registration began on June 1, 1951, and divorce registration began in June 1961. Copies of marriage records prior to June 1951 and of all divorce records may be obtained from the Circuit Court clerk in the county where the marriage or divorce occurred, or from the State Archives.

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**OFFICE OF  
CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER**


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John E. Smialek, M.D., *Chief Medical Examiner*

111 Penn St.

Baltimore, MD 21201

(410) 333-3225

Appointed by the State Postmortem Examiners Commission, the Chief Medical Examiner oversees Autopsy Services, Statewide Services, Toxicology, Administration, and the Center for the Study of Health Effects of Fire. The Chief Medical Examiner performs autopsies, when necessary, and provides the State's Attorney with copies of records concerning any death for which the medical examiner considers further investigation advisable.

**STATE POSTMORTEM EXAMINERS COMMISSION**

*Chairperson:* Benjamin Trump, M.D., Dept. of Pathology, University of Maryland School of Medicine  
(410) 333-3225

The Department of Postmortem Examiners was created in 1939 to replace a decentralized system of local coroners (Chapter 69, Acts of 1939). In 1982, the Department was subsumed into the State Postmortem Examiners Commission (Chapter 21, Acts of 1982).

The State Postmortem Examiners Commission appoints physicians as deputy medical examiners in each county. They investigate violent and suspicious deaths or deaths unattended by physicians. The deputy medical examiners file with the Office of Chief Medical Examiner reports of all deaths investigated.

Commission records are open for inspection to the family of the deceased and are acceptable in court as evidence of the facts contained.

The State Postmortem Examiners Commission is composed of four ex officio members and a representative of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene selected by the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene. The Commission appoints all professional personnel (Code Health—General Article, secs. 5-301 through 5-312).

**CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF  
HEALTH EFFECTS OF FIRE**

*Director:* John E. Smialek, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner

111 Penn St., 3rd floor

Baltimore, MD 21201

(410) 333-3250

The Center for the Study of the Health Effects of Fire was created in 1988 (Chapter 185, Acts of 1988). The Center studies the health effects of exposure to fire; gathers and analyzes data on fire-related injury or death; and maintains both a registry of persons who suffer fire-related injury or death, and a computerized data base concerning injuries and health effects of fire. The Center is a repository for information routinely collected about fires. Information collected by the Center and intended for use in research is confidential and not discoverable or admissible as evidence in a civil or criminal action to determine cause of death or liability for injury or death.

In accordance with the State budget, the Center funds pilot studies on issues or factors affecting injuries or health effects of fire. The Center also applies for federal or private research grants to investigate such issues. In addition, the Center communicates with national scientific data bases on toxicology, chemistry, epidemiology, and related scientific disciplines; collaborates with agencies, such as the National Bureau of Standards, that are involved in programs related to health effects of fire; and promotes interest in fire-related issues at educational institutions in Maryland (Code Health—General Article, secs. 18-701 through 18-711).