



The Council of the City of New York

Committee on Health

Jointly with

Select Committee on Technology in Government

"A Review of the City's Current Efforts to Implement an Electronic Death Registration System"

Wednesday, February 5, 2003, 10:00 a.m.
Council Chambers

Overview

Approximately 63,000 deaths occur in New York City each year. Each death must be registered and certified by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) before a burial may take place. In addition, certified death certificates are necessary to begin the probate process for families of the deceased. Currently, DOHMH utilizes a paper-based death registration system for the filing, correction and issuance of certified copies of death certificates. This paper-based system requires doctors to complete a death certificate that is subsequently delivered to DOHMH for certification; if any errors are detected the original doctor must be located and the certificate re-filed. The creation and implementation of an electronic death registration system (EDRS) in New York City would allow doctors and authorized hospital staff to electronically input information necessary to complete a death certificate and send such certificate electronically to DOHMH. Major components of the web-based system include electronic filing, registration, issuance, archiving, amending, reporting, analysis, financial management and administration. DOHMH has concluded that the major benefits of the system will include immediate computer-based error checking and feedback, quick manual review by DOHMH and feedback, printing of the burial permit at the funeral home, electronic submission of amendments and electronic requests for copies of certificates. However, despite the seemingly positive benefits associated with an EDRS, and despite an effort in the late 1990s by DOHMH to implement such a system in New York City, only New Jersey currently operates a fully-functional electronic death registration system, which operates on a limited basis only. DOHMH currently estimates that New York City will have a fully functional EDRS by calendar year 2004 that processes 20 percent of death registrations.

Welcome and Introductory Remarks

- **The Honorable Christine Quinn, Chair**
Committee on Health
- **The Honorable Gale A. Brewer, Chair**
Select Committee on Technology in Government

Panels

- **Panel One**

Dr. Isaac Weisfuse, Deputy Commissioner for Disease Control
New York City Department of Health



Steven Schwartz, Ph.D., City Registrar
Assistant Commissioner for Vital Statistics & Vital Records
New York City Department of Health

Edward Carubis, Assistant Commissioner for Management Information Services
New York City Department of Health

Mr. Carubis is the Assistant Commissioner for Management Information Services for the New York City Department of Health. During his 13 years with the Department of Health, Mr. Carubis has successfully managed the delivery of strategic technology applications, including enterprise case management, person-based repositories, and inspection scheduling systems. Mr. Carubis has transformed the Department of Health into a leading provider of on-line government services, including on-line requests for birth certificates. His recent accomplishments include the Restaurant Inspection Web Site, an on-line repository of restaurant inspection information for which he was designated a 2000 Smithsonian Award laureate.

- **Panel Two**

Maryann Carroll, Director of Government & Public Affairs
Metropolitan Funeral Directors Association &
New Jersey State Funeral Directors Association

Ms. Carroll is the Director of Government & Public Affairs for the Metropolitan Funeral Directors Association (MFDA) and the NJ State Funeral Directors Association. She is a former trustee of the NJ Hospice & Palliative Care Association and is a Governor's appointee to the NJ Commission on Aging. She has eleven years of experience in the funeral industry.

Robert Ruggiero, Metropolitan Funeral Directors Association Board Member
President
F. Ruggiero & Sons, Inc., Bronx

Mr. Ruggiero owns and manages Ribustello Funeral Home, F. Ruggiero & Sons, and Empire State Shipping Service which are all located in the Bronx. He has been a NY-licensed funeral director 30 years. For the last eight years, he has been involved with the effort to establish a NYC EDR system. He is trained and certified as a mass casualty officer for U.S. Public Health Services. His three businesses file over 700 death certificates annually with the NYC Dept. of Health.

Martin Kasdan, Metropolitan Funeral Directors Association Secretary-Treasurer
President
Schwartz Brothers-Jeff Memorial Chapel, Queens

Mr. Kasdan has been a licensed NJ & NY funeral director for the last 30 years. He is affiliated with Service Corporation International, the largest funeral home corporation in the world, and works in the daily operations of five NY funeral establishments. In addition to working on the effort to establish a NYC EDR system, for the past 5 years he has been the sole funeral director representative on the Centers for Disease Control's National Oversight Committee to establish guidelines for all future EDR systems.



Pamela J. Akison, Ph.D., Public Health Information Systems Consultant

Ms. Akison is a public health information systems consultant who holds a Ph.D. in information systems. She is a former director of the NY State Health Dept. Bureau of Production System Management. In that position, she headed the development of a statewide EDRS. Most recently, she served as a project manager at the National Association of Public Health Statistics & Information Systems (NAPHSIS) working for the Social Security Administration (SSA) to develop standards for an EDRS and its online social security number verification pilot.

- **Panel Three**

Donald L. Lipira, Vital Records Consultant

Mr. Lipira retired from the position of NJ State Registrar last year. Under his leadership, NJ Vital Records implemented an EDRS beta test using software initially developed by the New York State Health Department and was selected by the SSA for an on-line Social Security Number verification pilot.

**Luke Hilgendorff, Manager, Systems Support
New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services**

Mr. Hilgendorff has worked for the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services since 1977. He has served in several management positions within the Division of Management and Administration over that time. These jobs have always involved the use of computers and information technology to improve departmental operations. Since 1999, Mr. Hilgendorff has worked with the State Registrar and staff in the Bureau of Vital Statistics and Registration on the design, development and implementation of the New Jersey Electronic Death Registration System.

**Milton Lane, Metropolitan Funeral Directors Association Board Member
Assistant Manager/Vice President
Paul Lane Funeral Home, Jamaica, Queens**

Mr. Lane grew up above his family's funeral home, Paul Lane Funeral Home, in Jamaica, Queens. He has been a licensed funeral director since 1996 and a member of the MFDA board of directors. He is a member of the Greater Jamaica Community Civic Association and Better Community Civic Association. As a small business owner, Mr. Lane is a proponent of EDRS to streamline his business operations and improve service to bereaved families.



Vicki Thompson, President
Brooklyn & Long Island Funeral Directors Association President
Assistant Manager
L.H. Woodward Funeral Homes, Inc.

Ms. Thompson is a licensed funeral director and the Assistant Manager at her family funeral home, L.H. Woodward Funeral Home, in Brooklyn, New York. She is a Marine Corp Veteran, a member of the 79th & 81st Community Councils, a NAACP member, a PTA volunteer for P.S. 161, an Executive Board Member of the Decater/Stuyvesant Senior Citizens Association and the Financial Secretary of the Empire State Funeral Directors Association.

Public Comment Period

Public Comment Period – Members of the audience are welcome to contribute their comments, suggestions and questions to the Committee and Select Committee during the public comment period. Speakers are asked to submit their names to the Sergeant-at-Arms at the beginning of the hearing. Committee staff will then assemble an order of speakers and each speaker will have up to three minutes for comment.

Upcoming Technology in Government Events

“Oversight – A Review of the Human Services Extranet Project”
Thursday, February 6, 2003, 10:00 a.m.
250 Broadway, 14th Floor
