

About the Certificate of Still Birth

Santa Clara County | January 2008

What is a Certificate of Still Birth?

A stillbirth is a naturally occurring, intrauterine death that occurs after the 20th week of pregnancy all the way up to birth. This is not an early loss or abortion; rather, this is a baby who is born dead. It could even be a post-term baby- who went to 42 gestational weeks and who might weigh more than ten lbs, but, who dies one minute prior to birth is considered “stillborn.”

Up until now, the Vital Records and Registration office has only issued a Fetal Death Certificate for stillbirths. Now, a Certificate of Still Birth will be made available to parents who experience a fetal death/stillbirth, in which the fetus has completed the 20th week of uterogestation, and who request it.

The Certificate of Still Birth contains the date of the stillbirth; the county in which the stillbirth occurred; the name and gender of the stillborn fetus, as provided on the fetal death certificate; the time and place of stillbirth; the names, date of birth, and state of birth of the parents; the file number of the corresponding fetal death certificate. The title at the top reads: Certificate of Still Birth; and at the bottom it states: This Certificate of Still Birth is not proof of a live birth.

The Certificate of Still Birth will be issued on banknote security paper and is a commemorative document that will be offered in addition to the Fetal Death Certificate*.

Why is it being offered now?

On July 27th, 1994, an Arizona woman gave birth to her fourth child on what was her baby’s due date. Only 15 minutes prior to giving birth, the baby’s heartbeat stopped suddenly. Her daughter died during the birth process. When she called the vital records office to request a birth certificate, she was told that a birth certificate was not available and was offered only a fetal death certificate. This woman vowed to change this for other women and founded a group for bereaved parents called the MISS Foundation (www.missfoundation.org).

The MISS Foundation has worked to pass the MISSing Angels Act (www.missingangelsbill.org) in over 18 states that permit the offering of a Certificate of Still Birth to families instead of merely a Fetal Death Certificate. According to the MISS Foundation, the Certificate of Still Birth extends much needed dignity and compassion to women who endure the death of the birth of their baby.

What is the difference between a Fetal Death Certificate and a Certificate of Still Birth?

A Fetal Death Certificate is what has been historically offered for fetal deaths/stillbirths. The document contains the same information as the Certificate of Still Birth, mentioned above, but has an additional confidential portion which lists the cause of death; race and occupation information of the parents; and pregnancy-related medical information. The attending physician signs the document and a funeral home generally registers the document with the Vital Records and Registration Office. Thereafter, a Fetal Death Certificate is made available. The public portion of the record is available to anyone who can identify the record on an application and pays the (\$9) fee. The confidential portion of the record is only available to the parent(s) upon request.

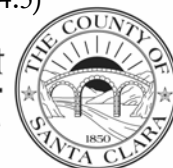
A Certificate of Still Birth is a new document for fetal deaths/stillbirths, made available after January 1, 2008. The document contains the information as listed above, and is prepared based on information listed on the Fetal Death Certificate by Vital Records and Registration staff, upon request of the parent(s).

If I had a miscarriage (under 20 weeks gestation) what are my options?

The disposition of a fetus of less than 20 weeks uterogestation does not require a fetal death/stillbirth certificate. A fetus under 20 weeks uterogestation may be left with the hospital for disposition according to hospital protocol, or may be buried/cremated upon written authorization by the parent(s) (Health and Safety Code 7054.3)

Public Health Department

Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System



If I had a stillbirth, how can I get a Certificate of Still Birth?

Location	In Santa Clara County	In another county	In another state
Agency to Contact	Purchase through the local Vital Records and Registration Office (\$9).** Note delays in order fulfillment until mid-February, upon approval by the Board of Supervisors	Check with the county where you experienced the stillbirth to learn their fee Or Purchase through the State Office of Vital Records(\$20) http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/birthdeathmar/Pages/default.aspx	Check with the state where you experienced the stillbirth to see if they have passed the MISSING ANGELS Act http://www.missingangelsbill.org/stchart.html or for a list of State Office of Vital Records' phone numbers, go to http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/w2welcom.htm .

For stillbirths prior to January 1, 2008, purchase through the State Office of Vital Records (\$20)
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/birthdeathmar/Pages/default.aspx>

If I had a still birth, do I have to get a Certificate of Still Birth? Do I have to get a Fetal Death Certificate?

No, both are optional commemorative documents.

*These documents do not apply to the termination of a pregnancy performed in compliance with a prescribed law governing reproductive privacy.

**Fees are subject to change

For more information, please visit the Santa Clara County Public Health Department Vital Records and Registration website at www.sccphd.org/vitalrecords or call the Vital Records and Registration public line at 408.885.2010.

