

Vital Update



Immediate Action Required

The Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Health Statistics has released preliminary statistics on Fetal Death reporting in Iowa. Per [Iowa Code 144.1\(7\)](#):

“Fetal death” means death prior to the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of human conception, irrespective of the duration of pregnancy. Death is indicated by the fact that after expulsion or extraction the fetus does not breathe or show any other evidence of life such as beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord, or definite movement of voluntary muscles. In determining a fetal death, heartbeats shall be distinguished from transient cardiac contractions, and respirations shall be distinguished from fleeting respiratory efforts or gasps.

This preliminary report shows Iowa is **underreporting** the number of fetal deaths. As of December 15, 2018, Iowa has reported 65% of projected fetal deaths; however, previous years place this percentage closer to 83.5%, which is a significant difference.

Possible reasons for underreporting:

1. The death was reported as a death but not as a Fetal Death (The death was entered in the Electronic Death Registration System);
2. The fetal death was reported as an Induced/Spontaneous Termination;
3. The fetal death record was completed but was not submitted to Vital Records; or
4. The fetal death record was never completed.

Your assistance is needed to identify these missing records. Please verify that all fetal deaths have been reported correctly. Reporting accurate information to the National Center for Health Statistics is one of our top priorities. This information is a valuable resource which is used by many of our local and federal partners.

If you have fetal deaths that were overlooked, please complete the [Certificate of Fetal Death](#) form. The form is available on the [Vital Records Portal Page](#). The original form, on registration paper, must be submitted to:

Iowa Department Public Health – Bureau of Health Statistics
321 E. 12th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the death registration team. Thanks for your assistance with this very important matter.

Contact Information

Name	Phone	Email
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