



## Virginia Funeral Directors Association Medical Society of Virginia

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JOINT NEWSLETTER



### *Virginia Funeral Directors Association and Medical Society of Virginia Work Together*

**Virginia's Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) should be used by all funeral directors and physicians**

Following the official launch of EDRS on November 1, 2014, the Division of Vital Records (DVR) began to receive hundreds of contacts from anticipated users detailing concerns or glitches with the system. Due to an awkward start, many physicians, and even the funeral service providers of the *Virginia Funeral Directors Association* (VFDA) who supported the notion of an EDRS, became frustrated with its processes. Projected participation failed to materialize, and dissatisfaction between the two professions and DVR/VDH hindered forward momentum. However, efforts of devoted members of the 125+ year old *Virginia Funeral Directors Association* and their *Medical Society of Virginia* (MSV)

*"The electronic age has caught up with the paper death certificate. No longer do the funeral directors have to chase down the physician to get a signature. They can sign from anywhere...The beach, the office, or any other place of their choosing. Who doesn't love that?"*



**- Dr. Kent Folsom, former Medical Examiner for Rockingham County, Emergency Room Physician with Sentara RMH Medical Center**

counterparts began moving the needle in a positive direction by growing the user base little by little. VFDA members are working with MSV, individual physicians and hospitals to encourage participation and assisting with enrollment. There is still progress to be made, but the collaborative efforts between VFDA and MSV will get users to a critical mass so the multi-million-dollar EDRS system will truly be able to create timeliness and efficiencies. Full utilization will allow funeral service professionals and physicians to work together seamlessly in support of the families who entrust their loved ones to them for the final act of care.

For more information:

Virginia Funeral Directors Association: <http://www.vfda.net/>

VDH/EDRS: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/vital-records/electronic-death-registration-system/>

### *Vital Records Receives Grant to Grow EDRS Usage*

For a number of years before the launch of Virginia's Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS), DVR and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) began discussions with those identified as the stakeholders or users of the program – namely, the funeral service providers and physicians. After deciding to develop the EDRS "in house," advancement of the project began, funding through the state budget was allocated, and the VDH Chief Information Officer and staff got to work.

After the launch of EDRS, VDH and DVR found that usage by the stakeholders was minimal. Due to many glitches and the general reluctance of some funeral service providers and a majority of physicians to "try new technology," Virginia Funeral Directors Association (VFDA) leadership was frustrated and began efforts with the physicians to encourage use of EDRS.

In 2016, DVR applied for and received a grant from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). The grant was awarded for a two-year performance period running through April 15, 2018. In that time, Vital Records *must* register and complete at least 80% of Virginia deaths electronically through EDRS; train stakeholders; market the EDRS; participate in stakeholders' conferences and meetings; as well as develop web browser enhancements. The grant also included establishing an EDRS Stakeholders' User Group, which had been a successful VFDA initiative during the January 2016 General Assembly process. DVR has hired three new people to do the statewide training and marketing of the EDRS.

### *Getting EDRS On Line in Harrisonburg*

**How one Funeral Service Provider and Harrisonburg physicians are making EDRS work to serve Virginians**



Jay McIntyre is a young, forward-thinking funeral director who serves not only the community in which his funeral home is located, but his colleagues who are also members of the Virginia Funeral Directors Association (VFDA). He serves as the Co-Chair of the VFDA Legislative Committee. Jay understands that technology is touching every profession. He is supportive of technology in the funeral profession space as well. The technology that has the capacity to create efficiencies that best help him, the physicians he works with, and the families he serves is the Electronic Death Registration System, or EDRS. This is a program that had been a long time coming and was developed internally at the

Virginia Department of Health and Division of Vital Records (VDH/DVR). Jay has worked tirelessly to help the physicians in Harrisonburg become comfortable with the EDRS. McIntyre says, "Our challenge as funeral directors is to show not only those in our field who have not

utilized this system to its fullest, but also the doctors who either aren't informed about its usage or have resisted using it to this point. Just a few weeks ago, I asked a Nurse Practitioner to sign up and just a matter of days later, we had another death certificate for her to sign.

"Taking full advantage of the opportunity to show her the EDRS, I sent the death certificate to her electronically. Together over the phone, I walked her through her first time using the system. She remarked how much easier using the system was than the old paper copies."

McIntyre indicates that the envoy work was done not only by him, but the Staff of Johnson Funeral Service in Bridgewater and Grottoes, most notably Daniel Chapman and John Johnson. With the three working together with each other, the hospitals and physicians, they have been able to achieve almost 90% physician usage in Rockingham County. He indicates that there are still a few practices not participating yet, and only one group who has said they will not until they are mandated to do so.

"I have taken great pleasure in showing the doctors in our area how simple this system is to use. In the paper copy days, we always printed and took two copies with us

"This system totally makes my life easier. I have 24/7 accessibility. Now funeral directors don't have to come to my home, or try to track me down in another city/town/county while I see patients. I cover a large territory between my two jobs so I cannot always be reached immediately by funeral directors. I find that having to click through 4 screens is a much easier and better system than the old paper copy."

- Angie Nesselrodt, NP - Valley Health/Page Healthcare Associates/Page Memorial Hospital and New Century Hospice

to any doctor's office, near and far. Now that is no longer an issue. Additionally, with the further implementation of the EDRS, we have seen the development of legislation to allow funeral directors to file their DCs at the local Health Department. Gone should be the days of sending a funeral director to another locality to get a death certificate signed, then take it to the health department, then making the trip back to the funeral home...all taking half a day or longer. We are in the age and era of electronics and utilizing this system to its fullest extent is incumbent on us!"



Sentara RMH Medical Center said, "The electronic age has caught up with the paper

For the physicians' part, Dr. Kent Folsom, former Medical Examiner for Rockingham County and Emergency Room Physician with

death certificate. No longer do the funeral directors have to chase down the physician to get a signature. We can sign from anywhere...the beach, the office, or any other place of our choosing. Who doesn't love that?"



Dr. Terry Overby, Nephrologist at Sentara RMH Evelyn Byrd Health Center agrees. "I like the entire program! I like the fact that when a

death certificate is sent to me, I get a notification email. I don't have to be tracked down between my office, the dialysis clinic, or as I see patients at the hospital. Being able to sign the death certificate on my own time is a huge help also. The electronic system is far better than the old paper system. It's cut down on mistakes, much easier to read and again, far more convenient. This system is much easier and better than the old way."

## Joint Newsletter From Virginia Funeral Directors of Virginia and Medical Society of Virginia



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