

BACKGROUND

Birth and death records are important documents used by genealogists to trace family histories. The Department of Health maintains all birth and death records registered in Pennsylvania since 1906. Legislation allows public access to birth and death records after a fixed amount of time has passed.

WHAT RECORDS CAN BE ACCESS BY THE PUBLIC?

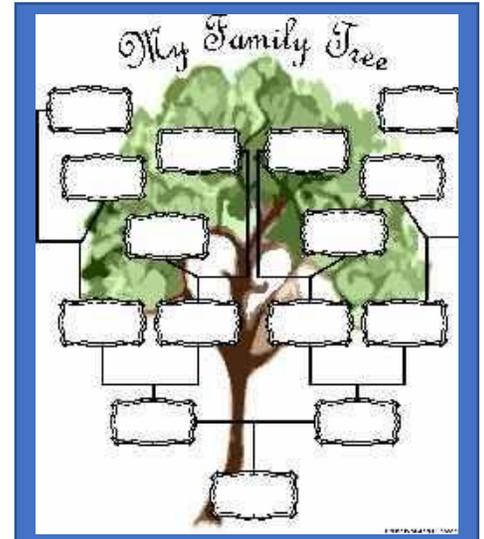
Birth and death record indices are available at the [Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission \(PHMC\)](#). Birth indices are available in January following the 105th year since the birth occurred. Death indices are available in January following the 50th year since the death occurred. Non-certified copies of public records can be obtained from the [Pennsylvania State Archives](#).

Questions regarding public birth and death records can be directed to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission at 350 North St., Harrisburg, PA 17120, or contact the State Archives at ra-statearchives@pa.gov.

HOW DO I OBTAIN A CERTIFIED COPY OF A RECORD?

All certified copies of birth and death records are issued by the Department of Health. To apply, complete an [Application for a Birth Certificate](#) or an [Application for a Death Certificate](#). If you are unsure of the date of the birth or death, please submit a [Multi-year Birth Application](#) or a [Multi-year Death Application](#). Self-search of records housed by the Department of Health is not permitted.

If you have any questions on how to apply for a certified copy, contact us at RA-DHPAVITALRECDINQ@pa.gov.



RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

- There are a variety of websites available that offer genealogy resources. Search the internet for “genealogy”;
- Information on Pennsylvania birth and death records that occurred prior to 1906 can be obtained by contacting the appropriate Pennsylvania County Courthouse. Visit <http://www.pacourts.us/courts/courts-of-common-pleas/orphans-court-clerks> for a list of county courthouses.
- Research material such as wills, deeds, mortgages, marriage and divorce records, tax records, and even military records is available at county courthouses;
- Some libraries have information available on individual county and state historical societies. Libraries can also house a wide variety of references for genealogical research, including maps for the area of interest.
- Some foreign countries have agencies that maintain records of interest. Addresses for these agencies can be found in the public library or by searching the Internet.
 - Question family, friends or old neighbors who may be able to provide valuable information. Photographs in family albums could also be a source of information. Family members may be able to identify unknown individuals in the photographs.