

New Hampshire's vitals

In 1992, New Hampshire became one of the first states to set up a rudimentary electronic vital records system. It allowed the state's 234 town clerks to send data to a central database via an electronic bulletin board. The state switched to a Web-based system in 2004. In October 2007, New Hampshire again took the lead by adopting a Web-based query system. It allows members of the public to search the state's vital records for up-to-the-minute data on births, deaths, marriages and divorces. The state has been at the policy forefront, too. On Jan.

In 1992, New Hampshire became one of the first states to set up a rudimentary electronic vital records system. It allowed the state's 234 town clerks to send data to a central database via an electronic bulletin board. The state switched to a Web-based system in 2004. In October 2007, New Hampshire again took the lead by adopting a Web-based query system. It allows members of the public to search the state's vital records for up-to-the-minute data on births, deaths, marriages and divorces. The state has been at the policy forefront, too. On Jan. 1, a law went into effect requiring physicians to register deaths online. Before that happened, only one doctor – the state medical examiner – had signed up to use the Web system. But in the first two months after the law went into effect, 500 doctors signed up. However, New Hampshire was ahead of the curve even before the measure was passed. The state already had one of the country's most efficient death registration systems. Last year, an average of only 2.7 days elapsed from the time a funeral director and a doctor attested to a death and the funeral director entered the information online until the information was added to the New Hampshire Vital Records Information Network. How was this possible when almost no doctors were using online registration? As in many states, funeral directors had to carry death certificates to

physicians to sign. But once that was done, they were authorized to enter the doctor's attestation into the online system. "It's hard to argue this [requirement] would save time, " said William Bolton Jr., New Hampshire's state registrar, adding that the big gain will be in accuracy. "We've got links to physician-training software, " he said. "If the physician uses an abbreviation or enters, for example, 'cancer' without specifying which one, the software won't accept it."