JOINT LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

NC Department of Health and Human Services

Vital Records Update

Mark Benton
Chief Deputy Secretary

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Vital Records Serves North Carolinians

- **The Office of Vital Records (OVR) is responsible for collecting, preserving and administering the North Carolina system of vital events**
  - **This includes birth, death, fetal death, marriage, and divorce**

- **In fulfilling its mission, OVR is dependent upon and collects data from multiple stakeholders:**
  - **Hospitals, birth facilities, and local health departments**
  - **Health care facilities, medical certifiers, medical examiners, local health departments, and funeral homes**
  - **County Registers of Deeds**
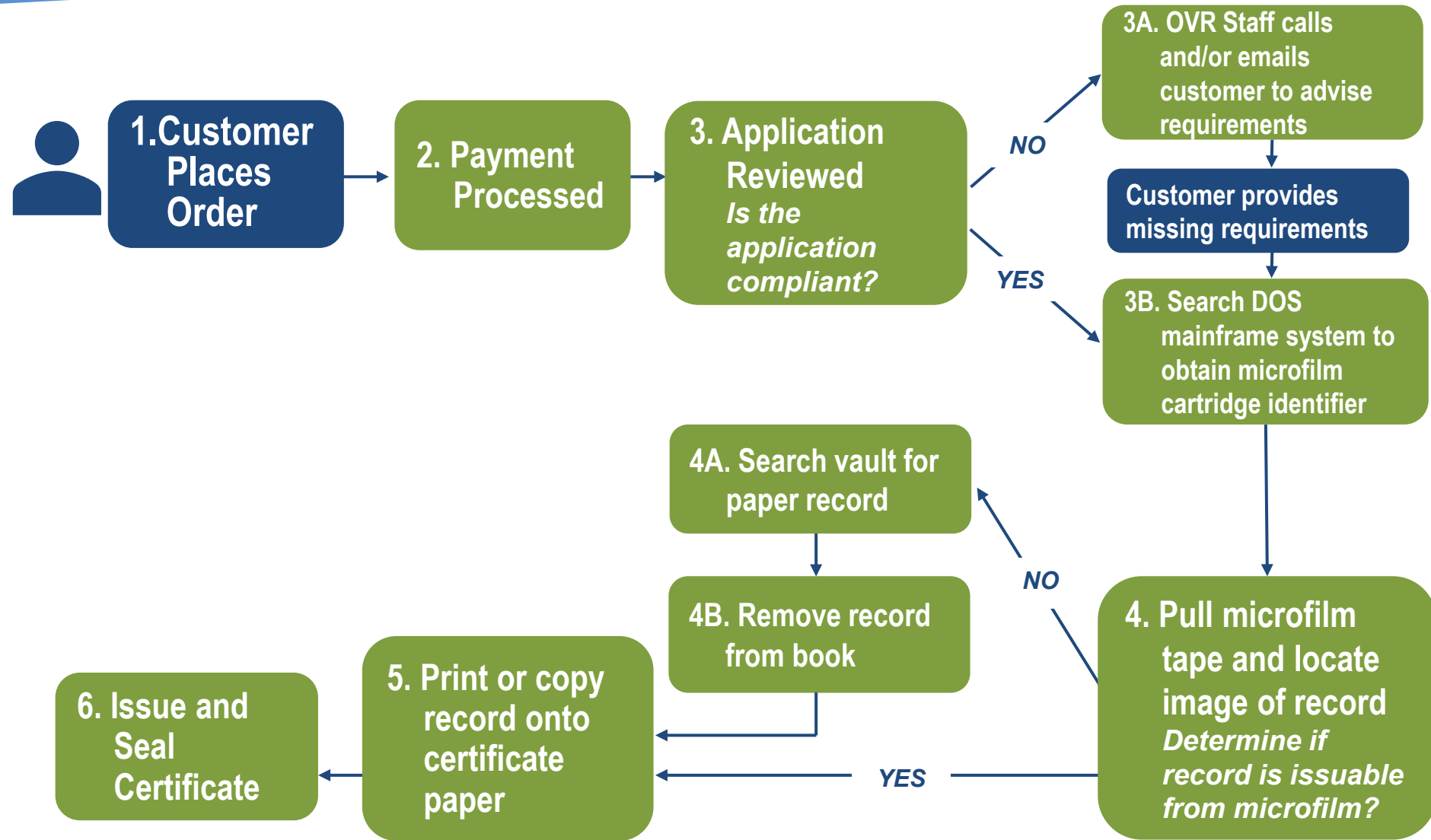 - **County Clerks of court**

How Vital Records Served North Carolinians in 2023

- **In calendar year 2023, OVR:**
  - **Registered***
    - **122,011 births**
    - **108,232 deaths**
    - **660 fetal deaths**
  - **Served nearly 45,000 customers seeking copies of certificates**
  - **Served almost 6,000 customers requesting amendments or new certificates pursuant to adoption or other sealed process**

Provisional data as stakeholder reporting for 2023 is still in progress.

Process to Issue Non-Digitized Records

RECORDS 1970 OR EARLIER • 45 MINUTE PROCESSING TIME PER ORDER

Flowchart:

1. Customer Places Order → 2. Payment Processed → 3. Application Reviewed *Is the application compliant?*

- NO → 3A. OVR Staff calls and/or emails customer to advise requirements → Customer provides missing requirements → 3B. Search DOS mainframe system to obtain microfilm cartridge identifier
- YES → 3B. Search DOS mainframe system to obtain microfilm cartridge identifier

3B → 4. Pull microfilm tape and locate image of record *Determine if record is issuable from microfilm?*

- NO → 4A. Search vault for paper record → 4B. Remove record from book → 5. Print or copy record onto certificate paper
- YES → 5. Print or copy record onto certificate paper

5. Print or copy record onto certificate paper → 6. Issue and Seal Certificate

Process of Issuing a Non-Digitized Record

1 – Search the DOS mainframe system to obtain microfilm cartridge identifier (Step 3B).

2 – Output on the DOS mainframe detailing where a record is located on the microfilms (Step 3B).
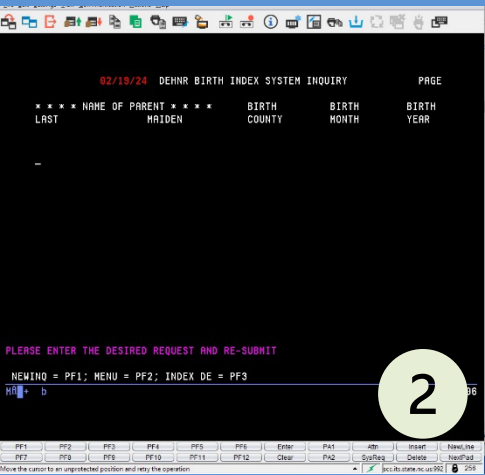
3 – Stacks of microfilms (Step 4).

4 – Review record on microfilm, determining if it is complete and legible (Step 4).

5 – Retrieve book of records from one of the vaults. Each book contains 500 records (Step 4A).

6 – Opening a record book with a screwdriver. They will next flip through the book until they come to the record of interest (Step 4B).
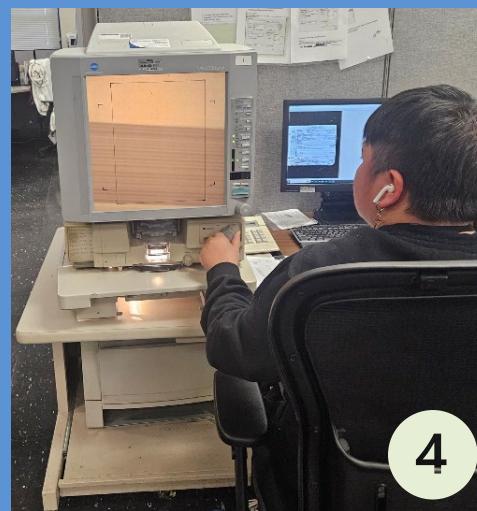
OVR Workforce is Strained and Unsustainable

- **Vital Records does not receive state appropriations**

- **53 permanent positions; 24 are vacant (45%)**
  - Entry level salary - $36,682

- **Relies heavily on Temporary Employees**
  - 10 member Call Center is 100% staffed with temporary employees; 90% turnover rate
  - Temporary employees must take furloughs and do not receive the same level of benefits

- **Temporary Efforts Undertaken by OVR**:
  - Hired temps and contracted staff
  - Established a second shift; worked weekends; paid overtime
  - Solicited volunteers from across DHHS workforce

Nearly Eliminated Backlog

	Backlog December 2022	Backlog December 2023
Certificate Issuance	33,086	1,631
Adoptions	3,287	72 *Pending payment: 1,159*
Birth Amendments	1,420	22
Death Amendments	386	0
Court Ordered Name Changes	2,938	0 *Pending payment: 3,778*

Significant Improvement in Processing Times

	Historic Processing Time	**December 2023 Processing Time**
Certificate Issuance	Up to 1.5 years	14 days
Registrations	Death: 6 months Birth: 2 weeks	Death: 8 days Birth: 2-3 days
Adoptions	1+ years	90 days
Birth Amendments	1+ years	30 days
Death Amendments	1+ years	2 days

Status of Death File for Calendar Year 2022

- **DHHS submits vital records to the CDC daily, and closes files annually**

- **2022 was a unique year – Transitioned death reporting from completely paper-based to electronic**

- **February 16, 2023 – Submitted the remainder of data and CDC closed both NC's and the national death files**

Single Vital Records System

- **North Carolina's Database Application for Vital Events (NCDAVE) is a single, unified system**

- **Electronic Death Registration was launched October 2022**
  - **Time to complete state registration of death decreased by 90%, from 6 months to 8 days**

- **Electronic Birth and Fetal Death Registration moved to NCDAVE in January 2024**

- **Next Steps:**
  - **Digitize records to improve timeliness as NCDAVE doesn't contain all paper birth records.**
  - **Implement remaining 3 NCDAVE modules by 2025.**

Progress on Digitization

- **General Assembly provided $8 million dollars for digitization of the 11 million paper and microfilm birth records**

- **This was a competitive procurement**

- **Recommended vendor has been identified and shared with State Department of Information Technology**

- **Expect award to be announced this month (March 2024)**

Better Tools to Improve Service

- **New call center launched in May 2023**

- **Callers can:**
    1) **Wait for a live agent**
        - **December 2023 wait time was 3.84 minutes**
    2) **Opt to receive an automated return call or leave a voicemail that is automatically queued for response when an agent becomes available**
        - **December 2023 wait time was 12.92 minutes for automated return calls**

Sustaining Progress

- **Provide additional funding to raise entry level salary for positions**

- **Reduce reliance on temporary positions; more easily transition temps to permanent roles**

- **Begin and sustain progress on digitization**

- **Continue to improve customer services/calls to OVR by developing and enhancing technology**