

## **Vital Records: Birth, Death, Marriage or Divorce**

### **By Rudy Wartella**

Many of our legal assistance clients cannot find their original birth certificate, marriage certificate, or divorce certificate. Don't worry, help is one click away at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w.htm>. Most people would not think to look to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for help in obtaining vital records; however, that is exactly the place to go through the above link to find state-by-state procedures for obtaining certified copies of your vital records. With very limited exceptions (federal or administrative purposes), Army legal assistance offices may not make certified copies of these records (Army Regulation 27-55), so it is important that you have certified copies on hand when the need arises.

You may need a certified copy of your birth certificate when you apply for a passport, get married, get a driver's license, or for various other reasons. When you click on the above link, just look for the state where the "event" occurred to obtain a certified copy. For example, if you were born in Michigan, click, "Michigan." In Michigan it costs \$26.00 to obtain a certified copy of your birth certificate. The Michigan link will give you an option of ordering the record online or by mail.

Although you may not have an immediate need for your birth certificate or other vital record, if you cannot find yours, you may want to order one now, so you have it when and if you do need it. It seems like I have needed my birth certificate at least 10 times since I graduated from high school. You may want to order more than one certified copy and keep them in different places. My mother still keeps a copy of my birth certificate in case I lose my certified copy.

According to the Application Guidelines published by the National Center for Health Statistics and found at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/guidelin.htm>, you should include the following facts when requesting a birth or death record:

1. Full name of person whose record is requested.
2. Sex.
3. Parents' names, including maiden name of mother.
4. Month, day, and year of birth or death.
5. Place of birth or death (city or town, county, and State; and name of hospital, if known).
6. Purpose for which copy is needed.
7. Relationship to person whose record is requested.
8. Day-time telephone number with area code.

If you need more assistance in obtaining these documents, our legal assistance office can help you. February, 2009.