



B.J. Walker, Commissioner

Georgia Department of Human Resources • Division of Public Health • Stuart T. Brown, M.D., Director  
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November 19, 2007

James E. Kucik, M.P.H.  
Director, MACDP  
National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road, Mailstop E-86  
Atlanta, Georgia 30333

Dear Mr. Kucik:

Legal authority for the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR) to collect health information is provided in Chapter 12 of the Official Code of Georgia (OCGA). Official Code 31-12-2 allows DHR "...to declare certain diseases and injuries to be diseases requiring notice...", to be reported in a manner and at such times as may be prescribed. Georgia Code Chapter 31-10, and Department of Human Resources Regulation 290-1-3 specify the scope and authority of the Georgia vital records program, which requires the reporting of all fetal deaths. DHR has declared that birth defects (i.e. congenital defects) and fetal deaths are among the conditions that are reportable by special request. This notification addresses the special request provision.

To track birth defects and fetal deaths in Atlanta and learn about how they can be prevented and controlled, DHR supports and conducts public health surveillance of birth defects and fetal deaths. In regards to monitoring birth defects, not all can be detected at birth, so simple examination of hospital records of children's births is not sufficient to provide adequate ascertainment of congenital defects. Reports are needed from sources that include but are not limited to hospitals, clinics, private practitioners' offices, diagnostic imaging facilities, pregnancy termination centers, and laboratories. Reports are needed for children and products of conception with congenital defects and for women pregnant with fetuses affected by congenital defects. For effective surveillance, the Department or its designated agent needs to have access to the medical records of individuals known or likely to have congenital defects so that cases can be identified and pertinent information can be abstracted. Pertinent information includes personal identifiers, detailed defect diagnoses, and the results of tests upon which the diagnoses are based. Similarly, the Department or its designated agent needs to have access to the medical records of women whose pregnancies resulted in a stillbirth and to all medical reports related to the evaluation of the fetus and placenta in the event of a stillbirth.

This letter authorizes you and your staff (listed below) of the Metropolitan Atlanta Congenital Defects Program (MACDP) to act with and on behalf of the Georgia Division of Public Health, DHR, in the public health surveillance of birth defects and fetal deaths.

Deborah Nurmi  
Patricia Stevens  
Joann Donaldson  
Debra Adams  
Wendy Sklenka  
Teri Hurlburt

Joan Garcia  
JoAnne Croghan  
Charlie Peters  
Jan Cragan  
Cynthia Bowker  
Fran Baxter

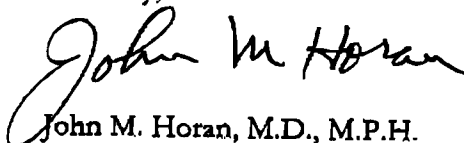
The following individuals will have access to confidential birth and fetal death certificate data files to perform public health surveillance activities associated with MACDP:

Jan Cragan	Karen Thornton
James Kucik	Don Gambrell
Carolyn Sullivan	Jamuna Chitra
Joan Taylor	Renu Balakrishnan
Mike Atkinson	Clinton Alverson
Mathew Strickland	Csaba Siffel
Suzanne Gilboa	

Please note that under the provisions of the OCGA 31-12-2 it is not necessary to obtain individual patient consent to allow the Department or its designated agent to collect information from medical records and related documents on patients with birth defects. Furthermore, in accordance with the OCGA 31-12-2, "All such reports and data collected under this authority shall be deemed confidential and shall not be opened to inspection by the public...". Hospitals and other providers submitting reports or providing records under this authority "...shall not be liable for any civil damages therefor".

This letter, and the authority provided to you and your staff, is valid through December 31, 2010, and is not transferable. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



John M. Horan, M.D., M.P.H.  
Acting Director, Epidemiology Branch