

OK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (OSDH)  
Partners with the OKLAHOMA GENEALOGICAL  
SOCIETY (OGS) to Bring Vital Records Online.



### News Release/Invitation to Event

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) will debut a new website, OK2Explore ([ok2explore.health.ok.gov](http://ok2explore.health.ok.gov)), where users can search vital records as well as purchase copies. Kelly Baker, OSDH Registrar of Vital Records, will formally open the new website at the OGS Monthly Meeting on Monday January 9, 2017 at 6 pm. The meeting will be held at the Oklahoma History Center, Chesapeake Room, 800 Nazhi Zudi Drive in Oklahoma City.

This initiative allows genealogists and other historians to view OK birth records occurring more than 20 years ago and death records occurring more than five years ago.

In 2016, legislation authored by Rep. Elise Hall, Sen. David Holt and Sen. Anastasia Pittman passed permitting OSDH to make these records publicly accessible. OGS President Mike Birdsong remarked, "This is a great example of public agencies and non-profit entities working for the greater good. It's been our honor to work with such committed OSDH staff."

"Vital Records has worked diligently over the years to preserve the integrity of the birth and death records, protect the identity of our citizens, and we continue to preserve the historical documents of our state and our families," said Baker. "Given recent technology advances, we are very pleased to have an opportunity to serve on this team with the Legislature, OMES, and the OGS to provide this new tool to the public at no charge."

OGS genealogists have been part of the testing phase and provided results and feedback to OSDH. "Kelly Baker and her staff have delivered a wonderful tool for family researchers. They not only listened to ways to improve the index but used that input to make the product better, plus they delivered it six months ahead of schedule," said Birdsong.

The legislation also determined that records of births that occurred more than 125 years ago and records of deaths occurring more than 50 years ago should be open record. While proof of eligibility is not necessary to request these records, applications, payment and identification are required.

For family historians, collecting copies of ancestors' birth and death certificates can be a timely and costly process. "With OK2Explore, users can immediately access records which helps verify an ancestor's data," reported Birdsong. "We certainly respect the privacy rights of living and recently deceased Oklahomans, and feel this index is a good balance between protecting privacy and researching family records."

OGS Board Members were especially impressed by OSDH Vital Records prompt response to this legislation, having delivered an operational website six months ahead of the deadline.

### **For further information, please contact:**

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