

# STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

## Department of Health

### VITAL STATISTICS 1919 - 1947

Vital Statistics data for West Virginia for 1919 - 1947 are given in this Vital Statistics Bulletin. This is the first attempt to publish, in bulletin form, available Vital Statistics data for West Virginia for each year since the Division of Vital Statistics was established in July of 1917. There are certain data available for part of 1917 and for 1918 but after a careful examination it was felt that for many reasons it should not be published.

#### History of West Virginia Vital Statistics

The Division of Vital Statistics was established by the West Virginia Legislature at their biennial meeting in 1917. This was the first attempt at central registration of births and deaths in this State and even then it was only on a cooperative basis as the law did not make the reporting compulsory, but it did provide the machinery for obtaining reports voluntarily from the physicians, midwives, and the tax assessor. In 1921 the Vital Statistics Act was amended to make the reporting of births and deaths to the Health Department, by the attendants, compulsory. Prior to 1921 the physicians, midwives, undertakers, etc., were required to report births and deaths to the Clerks of the County Courts of the County in which the event occurred, therefore, many of our counties have birth and death records that date back to 1863, the year that West Virginia became a State.

It was not until 1925, after several tests by the United States Bureau of the Census, that the completeness of registration met the minimum requirements

permitting West Virginia to be included in the National Registration Area. These minimum requirements were that at least ninety per cent of all births and deaths be reported to the Division of Vital Statistics. A subsequent test, in 1940, showed that we had slipped in fifteen years as only 86.4 per cent of the births occurring in December, 1939; January, February, and March, 1940, were reported.

In view of this fact it is felt that the data for the years prior to 1925, even though they are given, are incomplete. All data for the years prior to 1935 are classified by the place of occurrence of the event, data for other years is classified by place of residence.

### Methods of Collection and Presentation

The West Virginia Vital Statistics Law requires the attending physician, midwife, or other person attending a birth to file a birth certificate with the local registrar. The undertaker, or person burying a body, is responsible for filing a death certificate. The medical portion of the death certificate is filled out by the attending physician. A death without medical attendance is referred to the local health officer or coroner for investigation and certification. In certain sections of the State many persons are without medical attendance and the causes of death are unknown.

The causes of death have been classified under the title number of the 1938 Revision of the International List of Causes of Death. The data for the period 1932-1939 were classified by the rules of the 1929 Revision, while previous to 1932 the 1920 edition of the International List was used.

For certain Communicable Diseases the number of cases reported to the Communicable Disease Control Division of the Health Department is shown. These cases of communicable diseases represent reports from private