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**Report to  
The Vermont Legislature**

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**Annual Report on Deaths and Hospice Care: 2015**

**In Accordance with Act 25 (2009), Section 16,  
*An Act Relating to Palliative Care***

**Submitted to:** House Committee on Human Services  
Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

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# Annual Report on Deaths and Hospice Care: 2015

September 30, 2015

## Introduction

In accordance with *Act 25* of 2009, the Vermont Department of Health shall report to the House committee on Human Services and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare regarding the following:

- Number of persons who died during the preceding two calendar years in hospitals, emergency rooms, other hospital settings, in their own homes, in nursing homes, in hospice facilities, and in any other setting for which information is available;
- Number of decedents that received hospice care within the last 30 days of his or her life.
- Number of persons who died in hospital intensive care units, assisted living facilities, or residential care homes during the preceding two calendar years.

This report utilizes information from Vermont death certificates to address the items required by the Act. In a typical year, approximately 5,500 – 5,600 deaths occur in Vermont. For the time period of this report (2013 and 2014), there were 11,052 total deaths.

## Deaths: Location / Setting

The location and/or setting for deaths that occur in Vermont can vary significantly depending on the circumstances of the event and the wishes of the decedent and family. A significant number of deaths (on average, 1800+) occur each year in a hospital setting (Table 1).

**Table 1. Location of Deaths Occurring in Vermont Hospitals; 2009 - 2014**

	<b>Inpatient</b>	<b>Emergency Room</b>	<b>Dead on Arrival</b>	<b>Intensive Care<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>2009</b>	1425	355	20	N/A	1800
<b>2010</b>	1401	348	24	54	1827
<b>2011</b>	1208	334	34	197	1773
<b>2012</b>	1333	348	46	269	1996
<b>2013</b>	1122	349	26	301	1797
<b>2014</b>	1188	306	20	233	1747
<b>TOTAL</b>	7677	2040	170	1054	10940

<sup>1</sup>Intensive Care was added as a Place of Death on the death certificate in 2010.

**Table 2. Deaths occurring in the ICU, an assisted living facility or residential care home; 2011- 2014**

	<b>Intensive Care Unit</b>	<b>Assisted Living Facility<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Residential Care Home<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>2011</b>	197	3	7	207
<b>2012</b>	269	3	23	295
<b>2013</b>	301	55	192	548
<b>2014</b>	233	70	197	500
<b>TOTAL</b>	1000	131	419	1550

<sup>2</sup>Licensed as such by State of Vermont Department of Aging and Independent Living.

For the period of 2009 to 2014, there was an increase in the number of deaths occurring at decedents' home and hospice facilities (Table 3). The increase in the number of deaths occurring at nursing homes or long-term care facilities stopped in 2012, rebounded in 2013, and then decreased in 2014.

Table 3. Deaths Occurring in Vermont outside of a hospital; 2009 – 2014

	Nursing Home or Long Term Care Facility <sup>3</sup>	Decedent's Home	Hospice Facility	Other or Unknown	TOTAL
<b>2009</b>	1477	1389	116	204	3186
<b>2010</b>	1601	1508	134	221	3464
<b>2011</b>	1635	1581	120	248	3584
<b>2012</b>	1536	1641	152	223	3552
<b>2013</b>	1635	1675	178	250	3738
<b>2014</b>	1527	1797	194	252	3770
<b>TOTAL</b>	9411	9591	894	1398	21294

<sup>3</sup>Includes licensed assisted living facilities and licensed residential care homes.

## Hospice Care

Vermont's Electronic Death Registration System includes a question about whether the decedent received hospice care within the last 30 days of his or her life (Table 4).

For the period of 2009 and 2010, a total of 2,929 decedents received hospice care during the last 30 days of life. This increased to 3,830 decedents for the period of 2011 and 2012. The most current data – combined years of 2013 and 2014 – shows that the increase has continued and now stands at 4,242.

Table 4. Hospice Care within last 30 days of life

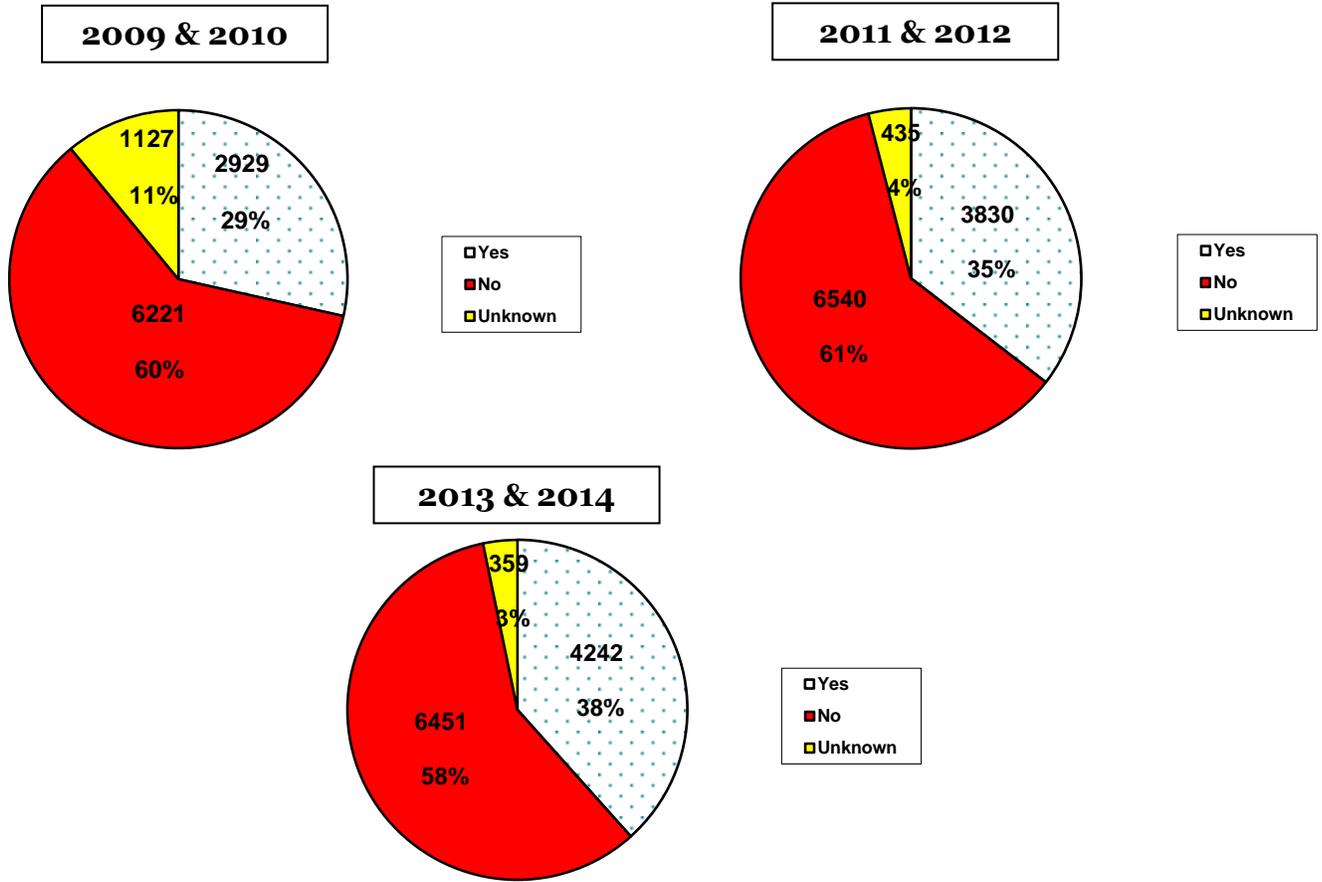
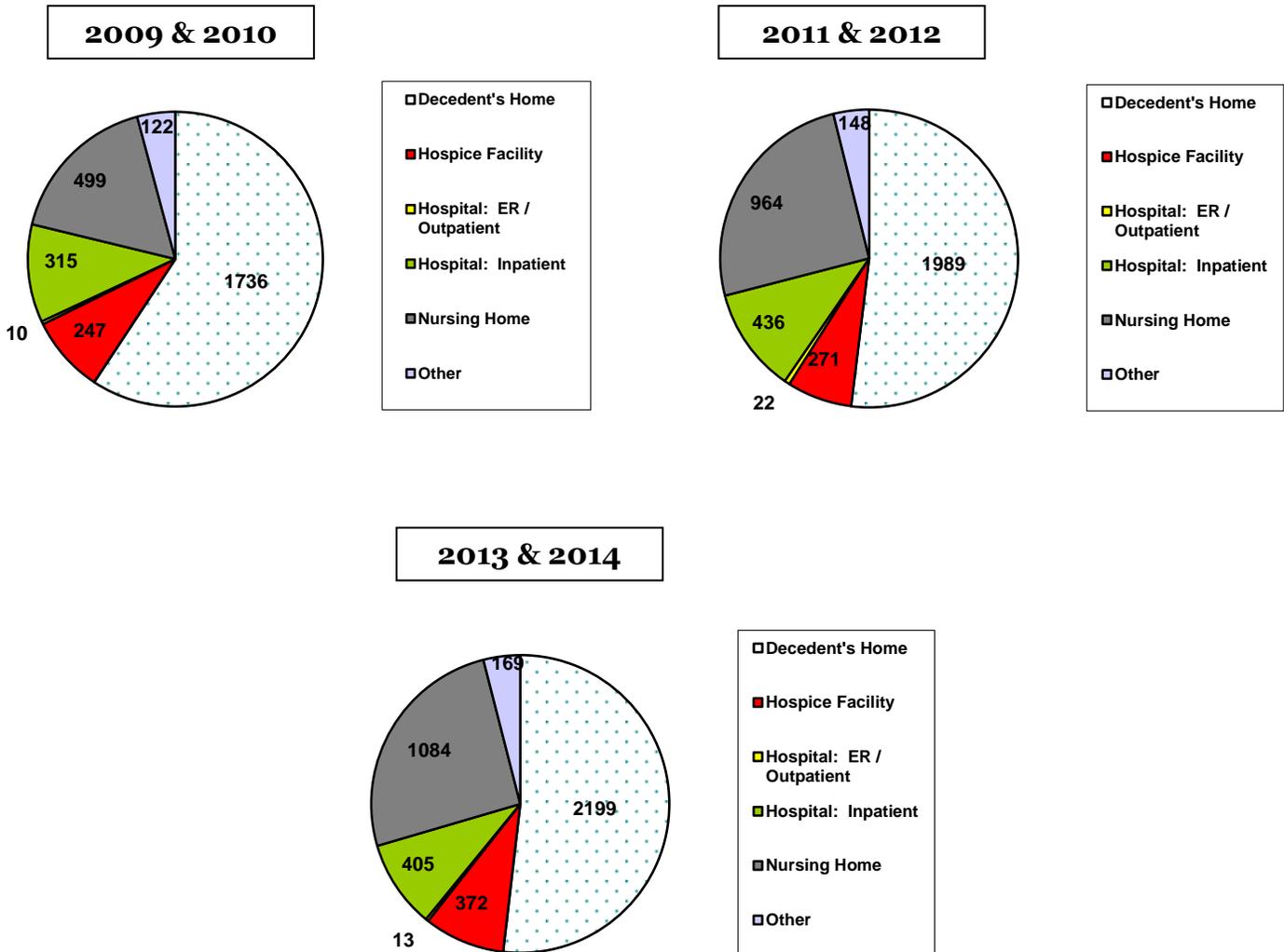


Table 5. Place of Death after Hospice Care within last 30 days of life<sup>3,4,5</sup>



<sup>3</sup>Includes licensed assisted living facilities and licensed residential care homes.

<sup>4</sup>2011 & 2012 data for “Other” includes two (2) events for Dead on Arrival at Hospital and thirteen (13) events for Intensive Care Unit.

<sup>5</sup>2013 & 2014 data for “Other” includes two (2) events for Dead on Arrival at Hospital and eleven (11) events for Intensive Care Unit.

## Conclusions

It is difficult to draw any conclusions at this time from the existing data on whether Vermont is experiencing any significant changes or trends regarding deaths at home or in hospice settings.

The reasons are:

- 1) In 2012 , the Vermont Legislature changed the statutes to allow physician assistants and advance practice registered nurses to complete the death certificate and certify cause-of-death. These new “reporters” may be providing different (and more accurate) information regarding hospice care and where death occurred because of their close proximity to the death setting. We have observed a growing number of PA’s and APRN’s are completing death certificates;
- 2) The total number of deaths for 2013 and 2014 compared to the previous two years increased by a sizable 247 events. Any increase in the number of deaths at home or in hospice setting could be attributable to the overall increase in deaths.

There may be indications that the number of deaths of persons who received hospice care within the last 30 days of life are increasing at the decedent’s home and nursing homes. (It is important to note that the category of “Nursing Home” includes assisted living facilities and licensed residential care homes.)

The next report will include data for 2015 and 2016 and should allow us to identify whether any statistically significant changes are occurring without other confounding factors, such as the change to death reporting sources and the revised death registration system.<sup>6</sup> The department will continue to ask the appropriate questions and monitor for any significant trends.

**<sup>6</sup>The Vital Records Office implemented the Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. The system changed the death reporting process and improved the quality and timeliness of data collection.**

## Appendices

### § 5208. HEALTH DEPARTMENT; REPORT ON STATISTICS

Beginning October 1, 2011 and every two years thereafter, the Vermont department of health shall report to the house committee on human services and the senate committee on health and welfare regarding the number of persons who died during the preceding two calendar years in hospital emergency rooms, other hospital settings, in their own homes, in a nursing home, in a hospice facility, and in any other setting for which information is available, as well as whether each decedent received hospice care within the last 30 days of his or her life. Beginning with the 2013 report, the department shall include information on the number of persons who died in hospital intensive care units, assisted living facilities, or residential care homes during the preceding two calendar years.