

New software at Belle Glade hospital speeds birth registries

Belle Glade hospital goes electronic, cutting out cumbersome paperwork



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Breann Hollon, 25, of Santa Ynez, Calif., cradles Addisen at Glades General Hospital, which used the Electronic Birth Registry to collect Hollon's information. "Quick and easy," said Hollon, who remembers having to complete piles of paperwork after her firstborn.

By Tina Shah | South Florida Sun-Sentinel
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Breann Hollon was in no mood to mark tiny boxes to get a birth certificate for her newborn. She just wanted to cradle her 7-pound, 8-ounce girl born recently at Glades General Hospital.

She also had to entertain her 2-year-old daughter. Lucky for Hollon, she didn't have to waste time on paperwork.

The Belle Glade hospital this summer became the first hospital in Palm Beach County to electronically register newborns. At Hollon's bedside, a hospital employee rolled in a computer, collected her personal information and asked her to proofread and electronically sign it.

"I thought it was really efficient," said Hollon, who remembered piles of paper around her after her firstborn. "Quick and easy."

Once-cumbersome paperwork, which could have taken up to two months to complete, now can be done on the Internet in 10 minutes. Newborns are registered directly with the state Health Department, skipping hours of paperwork with the hospital.

Hollon, 25, could pick up her daughter's birth certificate from the county Office of Vital Statistics after being released on Sept. 21. She could get the Social Security card days later or have it mailed to her Santa Ynez, Calif., home. Her father-in-law, who works in the sugar cane industry, could not make it to California so Hollon and her family flew to South Florida to have the baby.

In addition to the electronic registration, mothers are screened for the state's Healthy Start program, which offers counseling, nutritional training and parenting advice.

The state Department of Health bought the Electronic Birth Registry software for \$114,000 from Netsmart Technologies Inc. of Great River, N.Y. The department tested the system for about eight months and found no glitches, Deputy State Registrar Ken Jones said.

The state Office of Vital Statistics showed off the software five months ago to about 12 Palm Beach County hospitals that deliver babies. Glades General was the first to express an interest, Jones said.

The state is giving the software to hospitals. Glades General, which keeps about 70 percent of its records electronically, already had 23 computers on wheels and wireless Internet connections in patient rooms.

The registry is just one of a few new electronic systems the hospital is launching this year, said Adam Levenson, chief information officer for Glades General. The hospital also plans to roll out a system that will scan patients' medical bracelets to match their proper medications.

Levenson said he wants the hospital to be paperless by 2009, when he and other employees move to a new building two miles north. Funded by taxpayer dollars, Glades General is the county's only public hospital. The Health Care District of Palm Beach County plans to replace the facility for about \$70 million.

There are 14 other hospitals in the state using the Electronic Birth Registry, including Jupiter Medical Center.

Baptist Medical Center South in Jacksonville was the first in the state in November to adopt the birth registry software.