

TRILLIUM GIFT OF LIFE NETWORK (TGLN)

Routine Notification and Medical Assistance in Dying

Guiding Principles

1. All efforts should be made to ensure the opportunity to donate organs and tissue is offered to every medically eligible Ontarian as part of high quality end-of-life care.
2. Each patient should be extended autonomy and dignity to provide first-person consent in accordance with their own preference on organ and tissue donation. Every medically eligible patient should be offered an opportunity to speak with an expert in donation from Trillium Gift of Life Network.
3. Patients who have been approved to receive medical assistance in dying should be offered the opportunity to be organ and tissue donors with sufficient time to incorporate donation into their plan for end-of-life care.
4. A patient's decision to seek medical assistance in dying should be made prior to the initiation of any discussion of organ and tissue donation. The organ donation, procurement, and transplant teams must not influence the patient's decisions or approval to receive medical assistance in dying.
5. Approval to receive medical assistance in dying constitutes an "imminent death" and requires designated facilities to notify TGLN in accordance with the *Trillium Gift of Life Network Act*. In circumstances outside of these designated facilities, patients should be offered the opportunity to speak with an expert in donation to understand the process of organ and tissue donation.

Frequently Asked Questions from Designated Hospitals and Healthcare Professionals (HCP)

Does a patient who is participating in medical assistance in dying require notification to TGLN under the *Trillium Gift of Life Network Act*?

Yes. Under the *Trillium Gift of Life Network Act* designated hospitals are required to report all deaths, including anticipated/imminent deaths.

**NOTE: NOTIFICATION DOES NOT IMPLY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING WILL PROCEED OR THAT AN APPROACH WILL OCCUR; TGLN WILL WORK CLOSELY WITH THE PRIMARY CLINICIAN TO DETERMINE HOW TO BEST PROCEED IN EACH CASE*

Are patients participating in medical assistance in dying eligible for organ and tissue donation?

Yes. As with any notification that TGLN receives, each patient is assessed for eligibility to donate organs and tissue on a case by case basis.

When is TGLN notified of a patient participating in the medical assistance in dying process?

After a request is received in writing and the patient is deemed to be eligible for medical assistance in dying, the primary clinician should contact TGLN to assess eligibility to donate.

Why does TGLN need to be notified after the written request in the medical assistance in dying process and not later in the process?

Patients have told us they want to know about this opportunity early, and those who want to donate need to have information about their donation choices as it may impact the plans they make for end of life. Notification later in the medical assistance in dying process may restrict the ability to honour a patient's wish to help others through organ and tissue donation. Patients need to have all potential information available to make the decision that is best for them.

If the patient is eligible for donation, how might the location of the medical assistance in dying process change?

Patients participating in medical assistance in dying are more likely to be eligible for tissue donation, rather than organ donation. The location of your patient's medically-assisted death need not change for tissue donation to occur. In order to facilitate tissue recovery, eligible patients who have provided consent for donation will be transferred to an appropriate tissue recovery location post-mortem.

For some patients participating in medical assistance in dying, organ donation may be possible. The medical assistance in dying process must occur in a hospital setting. Notification after the written request can ensure that the patient's eligibility for organ donation is assessed, including an assessment of local hospitals in the patient's area that are capable of the organ donation process.

If the patient is eligible for organ donation, how might the medical assistance in dying procedure change?

For organ donation to occur, death must take place in the hospital near an operating room where monitoring can occur i.e. critical care unit or recovery room. Organ donation can only occur if a clinician administered intravenous medication protocol is used to facilitate medical assistance in dying. The patient is not eligible for organ donation if they choose to self-administer oral medications.

***NOTE: PATIENT MAY WITHDRAW FROM THE DONATION PROCESS AT ANY POINT**

If the patient is eligible for organ donation, what would be involved in the testing and screening?

Screening for organ donation requires a number of tests to assess organ suitability. These can be done as either an inpatient or outpatient, and will be coordinated to be as minimally disruptive to the patient as possible. These tests include, but may not be limited to:

- standard blood tests
- chest x-ray
- ultrasound of the liver and kidneys

Final determination of organ suitability for transplantation is made by individual transplant programs.

How does TGLN plan the Patient Donation Discussion/Approach with the Primary Clinician?

A specialized coordinator at TGLN will work with the Primary Clinician from the initial notification onwards in order to:

1. Understand the status and timing of the medical assistance in dying process
2. Assess health history prior to approach to determine eligibility to donate
3. Develop a plan together to discuss donation with the patient ensuring it is minimally disruptive and respectful of the patient's wishes

Who will contact the Office of the Chief Coroner to obtain approval for the donation process?

Once patient consent has been obtained, TGLN will contact the Office of the Chief Coroner (OCC) via Provincial Dispatch to speak with a Medical Assistance in Dying Nurse Investigator prior to death in organ donation cases. In situations where the patient is eligible for tissue donation, TGLN contacts Provincial Dispatch to speak with a Medical Assistance in Dying Nurse Investigator after the death has been reported to TGLN by the healthcare professional. The Medical Assistance in Dying Nurse Investigator will provide approval or determine if any restrictions will be applied.