



MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING INFORMATION FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

What is medical assistance in dying?

Medical assistance in dying is one of a number of choices that can be considered in end-of-life care. It is a process where a medical practitioner or nurse practitioner (“practitioner”) helps a patient who wants to voluntarily and intentionally end their life by:

- Administering a medication to the patient that will cause their death peacefully; or
- Prescribing a medication that will cause their death peacefully. The patient may be able to take the medication themselves.

Responsibilities of health care providers who are not comfortable participating

- Health care providers are required to provide patients who request information on medical assistance in dying with the Central Coordinating Service’s contact card. Health care providers may also provide patients with an information package, consisting of an information sheet and questions and answers document.
- Health care providers are not required to discuss or review the information package with the patient if they do not want to. Other than providing the Central Coordinating Service contact card on request, nothing compels a health care provider to provide, or assist in providing, medical assistance in dying.
- If you have been asked about medical assistance in dying, but do not want to participate or discuss the service, you should:
 - Provide the Central Coordinating Service contact card, and (optional) information package to the patient; and
 - Direct the patient to contact the Central Coordinating Service to facilitate access to a practitioner that can provide them with more information, conduct an assessment, and if applicable, provide medical assistance in dying.

OR

- Contact the Central Coordinating Service on behalf of the patient.

NWT Central Coordinating Service

Toll-free at 1-855-846-9601
or direct at 1-867-767-9050 Ext. 49008
Monday - Friday: 8:30am - 5:00pm

- A medical practitioner or nurse practitioner who receives any form of a written request for medical assistance in dying and refers the patient to the Central Coordinating Service, or transfers the care of the patient, is required to complete a Form 1 – **Record of Patient Referral**. The completed form must be put on the



patient's medical record and a copy faxed to the Review Committee within 72 hours of the referral.

Review Committee

Phone: 1(867) 767-9062 ext. 49190

Secure Fax: 1(867) 873-2315

Responsibilities of health care providers interested in participating

- If you are interested in participating in medical assistance in dying services to any extent, you should ensure you are familiar with the *Medical Assistance in Dying Interim Guidelines for the Northwest Territories (Guidelines)*. The *Guidelines* set the rules for how medical assistance in dying can be requested and provided in the NWT, including the responsibilities and obligations of patients and health care providers. The rules included in the *Guidelines* reflect those established in the *Criminal Code*.
- If a patient asks you about medical assistance in dying, you should:
 - Provide the patient with the Central Coordinating Service's contact card, an information package on medical assistance in dying (information sheet and questions and answers document), and any other additional information you feel might be helpful to them (see **additional resources** below).
 - Review the information with the patient in a factual manner, limited to how medical assistance in dying may be an option for patients who meet the eligibility criteria and how the process works in the NWT. **When information on the lawful provision of medical assistance in dying is provided to a patient, health care providers must exercise extreme caution to ensure they do not recommend, incite, or encourage medical assistance in dying.**
 - Discuss your patient's health care condition with them and ensure they have considered all of the options and treatment available to them. These may include comfort care, pain control, hospice care, palliative care, or other options. They do not have to accept any of these services.
- If a patient would like to proceed with making a formal written request, a practitioner can help the patient to complete Form 2 – **Formal Written Request by Patient**.
 - The practitioner's role is to assess the patient to determine whether or not they have a **grievous and irremediable medical condition**.
 - If the patient meets the criteria for a grievous and irremediable medical condition, the practitioner may sign and date the relevant section of the Formal Written Request form.
 - In order to make the request, the patient must not sign and date the request until after they are informed by a practitioner that they have a grievous and irremediable medical condition
 - See the *Guidelines* for more details.



- If at any point you are not comfortable or are unable to continue participating in providing the service, you can
 - Direct the patient to contact the Central Coordinating Service to facilitate access to a practitioner that can provide them with more information, conduct an assessment, and/or if applicable, provide medical assistance in dying.

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Eligibility criteria

To receive medical assistance in dying, a patient must meet all of the following criteria:

- Have a serious and incurable illness, disease, or disability;
- Be in an advanced state of decline that cannot be reversed;
- Their suffering is constant and unbearable, and cannot be relieved in any way that they find acceptable;
- Their natural death is near, even if no one knows exactly how much time they have left;
- Be at least 18 years old;
- Be eligible for publicly-funded health services in Canada;
- Voluntarily request medical assistance in dying, without pressure or influence from anyone else; and
- Give informed consent throughout the process, including at the final moment when medical assistance in dying is to be provided.

See the *Guidelines* for more details.



Medical assistance in dying process after a formal request is made

Once a Form 1 - *Formal Written Request by Patient* has been received, the process for accessing medical assistance in dying in the NWT includes:

- The patient is assessed by at least two practitioners. Both practitioners must agree that the patient meets the eligibility criteria in order for the patient to be able to receive medical assistance in dying.
- There must be a minimum of 10 clear days between the date the request is signed and the date medical assistance in dying is provided. However, if both practitioners agree that the patient's death or loss of ability to consent will occur in less than 10 days, they may grant a shorter period.
- At the time medical assistance in dying is provided, the patient must be competent and able to provide consent.
- The patient is free to change their mind at any time, including at the time medical assistance in dying is to be provided.

See the *Guidelines* for more details.

Additional resources

- Information for Patients and Families:
<http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/node/2030/>
- Questions and Answers for Patients and Families:
<http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/node/2031/>
- Questions and Answers for Providers and Pharmacists:
<http://www.professionals.hss.gov.nt.ca/>
- Medical Assistance in Dying Interim Guidelines for the Northwest Territories:
<http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/sites/hss/files/interim-guidelines-medical-assistance-dying.pdf>
- Medical Assistance in Dying forms:
<http://www.professionals.hss.gov.nt.ca/>
- www.maidnwt.com

If you would like this information in another official language, contact us at 1-855-846-9601. Si vous voulez ces renseignements dans une autre langue officielle, communiquez avec nous au 1-855-846-9601.