



MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AND PHARMACISTS

General Questions

Q. 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 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.

Q. What is the Central Coordinating Service and what does it do?

- The Central Coordinating Service facilitates access to practitioners who are willing to provide information on medical assistance in dying or assess a patient, and if applicable, provide medical assistance in dying.
- The Central Coordinating Service does NOT provide information on medical assistance in dying.
- Anyone can call the Central Coordinating Service, including a patient or a practitioner.
- Contact information for the Central Coordinating Service is required to be provided to all patients who ask for information on medical assistance in dying.

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

Q. What is guiding how medical assistance in dying is provided in the NWT?

- The *Medical Assistance in Dying Interim Guidelines for the Northwest Territories (Guidelines)* guide the provision of medical assistance in dying in the NWT.
- The *Guidelines* adhere to the same eligibility criteria and safeguards as the revisions made to the *Criminal Code*.



Information for Health Care Providers

Q. Am I being required to provide this service?

- Health care providers (medical practitioners, nurse practitioners, and registered nurses) are only required to provide the Central Coordinating Service's contact card to patients who request information on medical assistance in dying.
- Health care providers may also provide patients with an information package, but are not obligated to do so.
- Health care providers are not required to discuss or review the information package with the patient if they do not want to.
- A medical practitioner or nurse practitioner who receives any form of 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

Q. My patient is asking me about medical assistance in dying, but I am not comfortable answering questions or do not want to participate. What do I do?

- You are not required to review any information with the patient, but you are required to provide the patient with the Central Coordinating Service's contact card. You may also provide the patient with an information package if you wish.
- The Central Coordinating Service will facilitate access to practitioners who are willing to provide information on medical assistance in dying or assess a patient, and if applicable, provide medical assistance in dying.

Q. Are practitioners being trained on how to provide this service?

- The Canadian Medical Association has developed a training package that is available to medical practitioners.
- The Canadian Nurses Association has developed education resources for nurse practitioners that are available to them.
- The Canadian Nurses Association is also developing additional resources for registered nurses to support their practice.



Q. Have drug protocols been developed for medical assistance in dying?

- Yes. A drug protocol has been completed.
- The Protocol has been shared with practitioners who have indicated their willingness to participate in providing the service.
- The Protocol has also been shared with the pharmacists at Stanton Territorial Hospital, Inuvik Regional Hospital, and the Fort Smith Health and Social Services Centre.

Q. I am a Nurse Practitioner. What is my role?

- Nurse Practitioners are allowed to provide medical assistance in dying as long as it is provided in accordance with the *Guidelines*.

Q. I am a Registered Nurse. What is my role?

- Registered nurses are allowed to aid practitioners in providing medical assistance in dying to a patient, as long as it is within their regular scope of practice. If you have questions about what is within your scope, please contact:

Registered Nurses Association of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut

Phone: 1(867) 873-2745

<https://www.rnantnu.ca>

Q. Who can provide information on medical assistance in dying?

- Social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and other regulated health care professionals can provide information on medical assistance in dying.
- Information provided must be factual and should be limited to how medical assistance in dying may be an option for patients who meet the eligibility criteria and how the process for medical assistance in dying works in the NWT.
- The *Guidelines* include further advice on providing information to a patient to help differentiate between providing information and promoting (which is still an offence under the *Criminal Code*).



Q. How can a health care professional ensure the line between “providing information” and “counselling” on medical assistance in dying is respected without impeding patient care?

- The *Guidelines* include advice on providing information to a patient.
- The information must be factual, such as how medical assistance in dying is an option for people who meet the eligibility criteria, and how the process works, but it must not be recommended or encouraged.
- Professional associations have started providing training for their members, such as the Canadian Medical Association and Canadian Nurses Association.

Q. Where can I go if I have more questions?

- If you have any questions about medical assistance in dying, please refer to the *Guidelines* or contact your Area Medical Director.

Information for Pharmacists

Q. I work in a retail pharmacy. What if I am provided with a prescription to dispense medical assistance in dying medications?

- This should not occur. The *Guidelines* limit the dispensing of medical assistance in dying medications to pharmacies located in a hospital.
- If provided with a prescription to dispense medical assistance in dying medications from a retail pharmacy, you must notify the prescribing practitioner of the error as well as the Medical Assistance in Dying Review Committee as soon as possible.

Review Committee

Department of Health and Social Services
Government of the Northwest Territories
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Q. What if a pharmacist is not willing to dispense the medications?

- Every health care provider and pharmacist has the right to conscientiously object from participating in medical assistance in dying.
- If a pharmacist objects, another pharmacist who is willing to dispense the medications will be asked to participate.
- Stanton Territorial Hospital is the storage facility for the required medications.



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/>
- 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.