

# Client Information



**EOLCOR**

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End of Life Choices  
O R E G O N

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## Client Services

### All Requests and Records are Confidential

End of Life Choices OR is a nonprofit organization that counsels and supports people as they explore end-of-life options. Our guiding principles are patient autonomy and choice in end-of-life care. We provide information to terminally ill Oregonians on end-of-life choices, including hospice and palliative care (symptom management), withdrawal of medical treatment, stopping eating and drinking, palliative sedation, and medical aid in dying under Oregon's law. We adhere to all guidelines and safeguards of the law.

We offer the following:

- Experienced volunteers who are available to answer your questions and provide detailed information on end-of-life choices by phone, in written format, or in person (in many areas of our state).
- Suggestions for conversations with physicians and other healthcare providers. If your physician is unwilling to support your choices, please notify us immediately.
- Information on end-of-life choices for all of your health care providers.
- Details on pharmacies that will fill the life-ending prescription, if you choose to use Oregon's law.
- Trained volunteers to be with you and your support team if you take medication for a planned death.

## INFORMATION ABOUT USING MEDICAL AID IN DYING

### **What are the eligibility requirements?**

Oregon's Death with Dignity Act (DWDA) allows physicians to prescribe (under strict guidelines) life-ending medication for their terminally ill patients. To be eligible to use Oregon's law, you must:

- Be 18 years or older.
- Be a resident of Oregon.
- Have been diagnosed with a terminal illness that will end your life within 6 months.
- Be capable of making your own healthcare decisions when requesting the medication and when taking the medication.
- Be capable of ingesting the medication without assistance.

Two Oregon physicians must agree that you are eligible to use the law. One physician prescribes the medication, and the other physician gives a consulting opinion. If either physician questions your judgment in making the request, a qualified mental health professional (psychiatrist or psychologist) must evaluate your judgment.

### **If I'm eligible for hospice, do I qualify for the law?**

Eligibility to use the law is not always the same as eligibility for hospice. Check with your volunteer.

### **What if I change my mind about using the law?**

You may change your mind any time; this option is your choice.

### **What is the process to qualify for medical aid in dying?**

To use Oregon's law, you must make 3 requests to your prescribing physician— 2 verbal and 1 written. The written request is the "Request for Medication" form included in this packet. Only you can make these requests; they cannot be made through an Advance Directive or by a family member or friend. The request must be made to a physician, not office staff. Please see the "Timeline" section of this document for details.

## **What about the medication?**

There are several medication options – your prescribing physician will discuss these with you. You must be able to self-administer the medication either by swallowing or by using a feeding tube -- the medication may not be injected. Your physician must mail or hand carry the prescription to the cooperating pharmacy. Your physician or our volunteer will give you the name of pharmacies. A family member or friend may pick up the medications. Some insurance policies may cover the cost of the medication and/or physician visits. Please contact your insurance provider to find out what your policy covers.

There is no obligation to fill the prescription or take the medication, if you have it in your possession. If you do not use the medication, call us for instructions for its disposal. It is illegal to use another person's medication.

## **Would my Life Insurance benefits be affected?**

Life insurance benefits are not affected by using Oregon's law. The law requires the death certificate to indicate that death is due to your underlying illness.

## **How is End of Life Choices Oregon involved?**

Trained and experienced volunteers are available to talk with you by phone, and in many areas of the state, they're available to meet with you in person. Our volunteers can answer questions about Oregon's DWDA and address your concerns. We also suggest that your assigned volunteer be present at the time you to take the medication.

EOLCOR Medical Directors are available to talk with physicians and healthcare providers to explain the requirements of the law. If your current healthcare providers are not able or willing to participate in the law, we may be able to connect you to those who will. Please contact our office if this is your situation.

## **How do I talk with my Physician about using the DWDA?**

Many people feel anxious about talking to their physician about aid in dying. By discussing your choices early in your illness, you are more likely to have time to ensure that your end-of-life options are consistent with your values.

No one but you can make this request to your physicians. Do not make it to your physician's office staff, nurse, nurse practitioner or physician's assistant, or leave a request on voice mail.

**Here are suggestions for discussions with your physicians.**

Language for someone who has a terminal illness:

“I want to have the legal option to use Oregon’s DWDA if my suffering becomes unbearable. Am I eligible?”

- If yes: “Will you be one of the participating physicians required by Oregon law? Will you record (in my medical record) that I asked to use the DWD Act and that I’m eligible?”
- If physician’s participation isn’t possible: “Will you record (in my medical record) that I asked to use the DWDA and that I’m eligible? Will you refer me to someone who is able to write a legal, life-ending prescription?”
- If I am not eligible: “What will my condition look like when I am eligible?”

Language for someone who does not have a terminal illness:

“When I become eligible, I would like to have Aid in Dying as an end-of-life option. Would you be willing to write a legal life-ending prescription when I am eligible?”

**The importance of medical records.**

If your physician is not participating with DWDA it is very important that the medical record be available to a prescribing/consulting physician for review. This can be expedited with signing a Release of Information (ROI) form and having the recent medical records (past 6-12 months including any referral to hospice, and hospice intake evaluation) sent to you or to the prescribing physician.

**If I live in a Retirement Community or Long Term Care Facility can I use the medication under the DWDA?**

Some facilities have policies regarding the use of the DWDA in their facility and some do not. You must ask the facility about their policy. If the facility prohibits a planned death under the DWDA, EOLCOR volunteers will talk with you about finding a different place for the planned death. If you choose to violate the policy, EOLCOR volunteers will not participate.

## Timeline for Using the Death with Dignity Act

### 1st Oral Request:

- Must be made directly to a physician - not office staff.
- Begins the 15 day waiting period. This is Day 0.
- Must be a request for life-ending medication – cannot be just a discussion about DWD.
- Must be recorded in the medical record.
- Can be made to any physician (including Prescribing or Consulting) as long as the Prescribing Physician accepts it as valid.

### During the 15 day (or longer) waiting period the following visits and forms are completed:

Prescribing Physician (MD or DO) certifies eligibility to use the law.

Consulting Physician (MD or DO) certifies eligibility to use the law and completes state compliance form and sends it Prescribing Physician.

### Request for Medication form (Written Request)

- You should complete it ONLY after BOTH participating physicians confirm a 6mo. terminal prognosis.
- Your signature must be witnessed by 2 people - only one witness can be a family member or someone who would benefit by the person's death.
- All dates on form must be the same.
- You should keep a copy.
- You can submit this form to the Prescribing Physician at any time by hand carrying it to Prescribing Physician's office. If it is mailed, you should confirm the physician received it.
- Prescription may be written no less than 48hrs. after the date on the Request form. If possible, you should complete it at least 48hrs. before the 2nd Oral Request, so prescription can be written the day of the 2nd Oral Request.

If either physician questions a patient's judgment in making a request for life-ending medication, a qualified mental health professional (psychologist or psychiatrist) must determine if her or his judgment is intact.

### 2nd Oral Request:

It is made to the Prescribing Physician at least 15 days after 1st Oral Request.  
Some physicians accept it as a direct phone call - not to office staff.

**After the 2nd request, the Prescribing Physician:**

- Collects completed Consulting Physician form and client’s Request for Medication form
- Writes prescription after 2nd Oral Request and 48hrs. after the date on the Request for Medication form.
- Completes state compliance form.
- Mails or hand carries prescription to pharmacy.
- Mails copies of all completed forms to Oregon Health Authority.
- After the patient's death, the physician submits completed Follow-up form to Oregon Health Authority.

**Pharmacy**

- Not all pharmacies will fill the prescription; not all pharmacists in a pharmacy participate.
- Prescription can be filled immediately or left unfilled at the pharmacy till needed. Some people want the prescription for peace of mind and never have it filled.
- Medication often has to be ordered and is usually available 2 to 3 days after being ordered.
- Prices vary.
- You should check with your insurance company for coverage.
- Pharmacist completes a form to mail to the Oregon Health Authority.

The minimum amount of time the process can take (from the 1st request to the written prescription) is 15 days. However, for many, it takes considerably longer - typically four to six weeks start to finish.

All information sent to Oregon Health Authority is confidential.

Life Insurance benefits are NOT affected by using Oregon’s DWD Act. The law requires that the death certificate indicate the death is due to the underlying illness.

**YOU MAY WITHDRAW YOUR REQUEST AT ANY TIME.**

**For your record**

Name of prescribing physician: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of consulting physician: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of 1st verbal request: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of 2nd verbal request: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Request for Medication form signed and witnessed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Choices at the End of Life

### **Hospice Care**

Hospice provides continuous medical treatment of pain and other symptoms allowing for a peaceful end of life for most patients. If you wish to die at home, hospice is the best way to get optimal care. Hospice caregivers provide symptom management, counseling, family support and other assistance. Hospice may be the best option for patients who can no longer make end-of-life decisions for themselves because of dementia or other medical conditions.

### **Discontinuing or Not Initiating Treatment**

For terminally ill patients, aggressive treatment may not be helpful and may prolong the dying process without improving the quality of life. You always have the right to refuse any and all treatment.

### **Voluntarily Stopping Eating and Drinking**

When patients die naturally of chronic diseases (such as cancer), bodily changes take away their appetite, and they stop eating before they die. Some people decide to speed up the dying process by Voluntarily Stopping Eating and Drinking (VSED), which also relieves some of the symptoms common to dying. If a patient is already close to death, VSED usually leads to death in 3-8 days. A patient who begins VSED prior to its natural occurrence may experience hunger and thirst for a few days before the onset of coma. These symptoms can be relieved by medications. It is important to avoid sips of water or other fluids, as this will prolong the process. Many persons have used this method successfully. End of Life Choices-Oregon recommends patients choosing VSED discuss their decision with all caregivers and make sure their caregivers are knowledgeable about VSED. Our organization recommends hospice during VSED. Contact us for our documents on this process.

### **Palliative Sedation**

Some dying patients experience so much pain or other unmanageable symptoms they cannot get relief from medication. Palliative sedation provides enough medication to keep the person continuously symptom-free and unconscious. All nutrients and fluids are stopped, and the person usually dies within a few days. Patients using palliative sedation should be monitored around the clock to be sure the sedation is adequate. Intensive monitoring can be done at home under hospice care.

### **Medical Aid in Dying – Death with Dignity Act**

In Oregon, some terminally ill, competent adult patients choose to ask their physicians for a prescription that will shorten their dying process. For some patients, simply having the prescription brings peace of mind, knowing that they have control when symptoms become unbearable and quality of life is unacceptable.



## Checklist for Clients

Many people postpone making arrangements for the end of life. Planning for the end of life allows individuals to spend their final days with friends and loved ones, focusing on the present. Informing family and friends of your wishes ahead of time relieves them of the possible burden of making decisions about your final arrangements.

Please consider whether the following common tasks are appropriate for you situation.

- Last will and testament or living trust
- Life insurance policies
- Advance Directive
- POLST (Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment)
- Durable Power of Attorney
- Health Care Power of Attorney
- Memorial service, Celebration of Life and/or funeral arrangements
- Detailed instruction regarding finances (bank accts., passwords, pensions, investments, property, etc.)

For further information:

website <http://www.eolcoregon.org> or call us at 503-922-1132