



Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) for Health Care Professionals

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Medical Assistance in Dying?

Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) is a medical procedure. It involves the administration of medications to intentionally and safely end the life of an adult patient who meets strict legal criteria, at the request of the patient. Federal law (Bill C-14) governs who is eligible, and the processes under which MAID can be delivered to a patient.

Who is eligible to receive MAID?

Federal law governs who is eligible to receive Medical Assistance in Dying. A person may be eligible to receive MAID if they meet all of the following criteria:

- ☐ Are at least 18 years of age.
- ☐ Are eligible for publicly funded health care services in Canada.
- ☐ Are capable of making health-care decisions for themselves.
- ☐ Have a grievous and irremediable medical condition which means:
 - They have a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability,
 - They are in an advanced state of decline that **cannot** be reversed,
 - They are experiencing unbearable physical or mental suffering from their illness, disease, disability or state of decline that **cannot** be relieved under conditions that they consider acceptable,
 - Their natural death has become reasonably foreseeable (this takes into account all of their medical circumstances and does not require a specific prognosis as to how long they have left to live).
- ☐ They have all the information required to make informed decisions, specifically about:
 - Their medical diagnoses,
 - Available forms of treatment,
 - Available options to relieve suffering, including palliative care.
- ☐ They have made a voluntary request for medical assistance in dying that is not the result of outside pressure or influence.

I have a patient who is requesting MAID. How should I proceed?

In order for MAID to occur, a series of steps must be followed. In general, it usually takes a minimum of at least two weeks to complete the necessary steps, but this timing can increase based on each patient's circumstances. If it is expected that the person will die very soon, then there may be other end-of-life care options that are more appropriate to consider.

Step 1: Written Request

Individuals must make a written request for medical assistance in dying.

They can access the Ontario Ministry of Health MAID Written Request Form here: [Clinician Aid A](#)

The individual's signature must be witnessed by two independent witnesses, who must sign the document at the same time.

An independent witness must be 18 years of age and understand what it means to request medical assistance in dying.

To be considered independent, the witnesses cannot:

- Benefit from the patient's death.
- Be an owner or operator of a health-care facility where the patient lives or is receiving care.
- Be directly involved in providing the patient with health or personal care.

There is a provision for patients who cannot sign for themselves.

Step 2: Medical Assessment

The patient must be assessed by at least two independent physicians or nurse practitioners.

For MAID to occur, both assessors must agree that the individual meets the eligibility criteria above. The assessment can take up to 1-2 hours per assessor. The assessment may include the following:

- A review of relevant medical history and current medical situation.
- An assessment of capacity to make decisions.
- A review of current medications.
- A psychosocial history.
- A limited physical examination.
- A detailed explanation of the MAID medications and procedure.
- Answering any questions or concerns that the individual or their family may have.
- Obtaining a signed consent form.

Documents from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care:

- [Clinician Aid C](#)
- [Clinician Aid B](#)

Step 3: A Period of Reflection

The law requires that a minimum of 10 clear days must pass between the date that the written request form is signed and the date that MAID occurs. For example, if a patient signs the request form on November 1, then the first possible day when MAID could occur would be November 12. MAID could also occur after this date.

Depending on timing, it is possible that the reflection period may have passed before the medical assessment process has been completed.

The legal requirement for a period of reflection may be shortened in special circumstances if both assessors are in agreement that this is necessary.

Step 4: Provision of MAID

If the individual is deemed eligible and decides to proceed with MAID, the provider will work with the individual and their family to create a detailed plan. This will include a discussion of the date, location, who will be present, and any special arrangements that are required.

To ensure patient eligibility, it is necessary for the provider to confirm capacity and consent immediately prior to provision of MAID.

Can Requests for MAID be made by advance directive or substitute decision maker?

All requests for medical assistance in dying must be made directly by the patient, and may not be through an advance directive, or the patient's substitute decision maker. The federal legislation specifies that MAID is available only to individuals who are capable of making decisions with respect to their health.

I have a conscientious objection to MAID. What are my obligations if I am asked to assist or provide information?

All health-care providers are expected to respond compassionately and respectfully. However, health-care providers have the right to conscientiously refuse to participate in MAID based on moral or religious beliefs. If a practitioner declines to provide MAID for reasons of conscience or religion, they have an obligation to provide an effective and timely referral.

It is important to remember, health-care providers with conscience-based objections may still explore the reason behind a request for MAID, as it may reveal opportunities to discuss other ways of relieving a patient's suffering, or other options for end-of-life care.

Can a person who has a medically assisted death donate their organs?

It may be possible for patients to donate tissue or organs, depending upon their individual circumstances. Further information will be provided to the patient at the time of the medical assessment.

What if I have other questions?

For more information about MAID, contact The Ottawa Hospital MAID Program: maid@toh.ca.