

Patient Overview of the Washington Death With Dignity Act

A Compassion & Choices of Washington (C&C) volunteer can help you navigate this process, locate physicians who are willing to honor your choice, and be present at the time of death, should you request it. Please call C&C early in your terminal diagnosis so that you have time to complete this process.

Eligibility:

- ◆ Must be an adult Washington State resident.
- ◆ Diagnosed by a physician as terminally ill, with disease or condition that will cause death within six months.
- ◆ Capable of making an informed decision, not impaired by mental illness, dementia, or depression.
- ◆ Able to self-administer the prescribed dose of life-ending medication.

Procedures for Requesting Life-Ending Medication:

NOTE: Do not complete the "Written Request for Medication" until after you have seen both the Attending and Consulting Physicians, see step 4.

1. Ask your primary care physician or specialist if he/she will support your decision to obtain life-ending medication and write the prescription. The physician who writes your prescription is called the "Attending Physician." If they say no, ask if they would be your Consulting Physician.
2. Make a first oral request for the DWDA prescription. Ask your physician, even if they have declined to participate in DWDA, to document your first oral request in your medical record.
3. You will need a "Consulting Physician" to confirm your diagnosis, prognosis, and mental capacity.
4. After you have seen both the Attending and Consulting Physicians, complete a "Written Request for Medication" form. This form must be signed by two qualified witnesses. One witness can be a family member; one can be an employee of your doctor; or both witnesses can be bystanders. When the form is completed, give it to your Attending Physician.
5. Make a second oral request to the physician, no sooner than 15 days after the first oral request, and ask your physician to document your request in the medical record.
6. Obtain the prescribed medication(s) from your physician or a pharmacy recommended by C&C. You or someone you designate may pick up the prescription. You can leave the prescription on file with the pharmacy until you are ready to fill it (check with the pharmacist).

Recommendations to Clients:

- ◆ When you have a life expectancy of six months or less, request a referral to hospice from your physician.
- ◆ Complete your Will, Living Will (Health Care Directive), Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care, and Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form.
- ◆ Talk to your loved ones about your decision.
- ◆ We recommend you keep your decision private and only share it with your inner circle of family and friends. If you do talk about it, please do not reveal the identities of participating physicians and pharmacists.