

Provincial Medical Assistance In Dying (MAID) Program

Frequently Asked Questions for Patients and Families

Non-Foreseeable Death

This information is intended to address some of the questions you may have about medical assistance in dying related to a “Non-Foreseeable Death”. A non-foreseeable death refers to a patient’s natural death not being anticipated in the near future due to their medical conditions.

The Provincial MAID Program is here to further explain the medical assistance in dying process and address any questions you may have. Contact information for the Provincial MAID Program is located at the end of this document.

1. What is Medical Assistance In Dying?

Medical assistance in dying has been legal in Canada since 2016 and is governed under federal laws Bill C-14 and Bill C-7 which set out the requirements and processes under which medical assistance in dying can be delivered to a patient. Medical assistance in dying is one of several choices that can be considered in end-of-life care, and is a process where a medical practitioner helps a patient who wants to end their suffering and life voluntarily and intentionally.

2. Who can provide Medical Assistance In Dying?

Only registered physicians and nurse practitioners working with the Provincial MAID Program can provide medical assistance in dying. Two practitioners are required to assess eligibility.

3. Who can request Medical Assistance In Dying?

You must be at least 18 years of age, be eligible for publicly funded health care in Canada, and capable of making your own health care decisions.

4. What does it mean to be capable?

Capable means you can understand and remember information needed to make decisions and understand the consequences of your actions, and demonstrate the decision is yours alone and not influenced by others.

5. What is a Medical Assistance In Dying provision?

This is the process where a medical assistance in dying practitioner administers medications by intravenous that will result in death at your request.

6. Can I write down my request for Medical Assistance In Dying in case I lose capacity and the ability to make decisions?

No, you cannot write your wishes for medical assistance in dying in an advance directive or your living will. You must be able to provide consent at the time provision occurs, which can be expressed verbally or with physical gestures which have been established with the Provincial MAID Program.

7. Can family members make the decision for me?

No, only you can make the decision to have medical assistance in dying.

8. Who is eligible for Medical Assistance In Dying?

Medical assistance in dying is provided only to legally eligible patients. To ensure this service is provided in a safe manner, a system of safeguards has been designed to protect vulnerable patients and support all patients to make an informed decision.

To be eligible for medical assistance in dying in Saskatchewan, you must meet ALL of the following conditions:

- Be eligible for health services funded by the provincial or federal government.
- Be at least 18 years old and capable of making decisions about your health.
- Make a voluntary request for medical assistance in dying free of any outside pressure or influence.
- Give informed consent to receive medical assistance in dying after being made aware of all options available to relieve your suffering, including palliative care.
- Have a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability (not including mental illness*).
- Be in an advanced state of decline in capability that cannot be reversed.
- Be suffering unbearably from your illness, disease, disability or state of decline.

* Note: Federal law indicates that Canadians with mental illness as a sole medical condition will NOT be eligible for MAID until March 2024. There are no exceptions to this law – the Provincial MAID Program must comply with all requirements and safeguards of the Canadian Criminal Code.

9. What does the Medical Assistance In Dying process involve?

There are several steps to be followed in the medical assistance in dying process. The Provincial MAID Program will explain the process in more detail and answer any questions you may have.

- a. **Written Request Form:** You must make a written request for medical assistance in dying. Your signature must be witnessed by one person. The witness must sign the document at the same time as you. There are conditions for who your witness can and cannot be which are explained in the request form. If there are challenges for you to complete the written request form, please speak with the Provincial MAID Program.
- b. **Assessments of Eligibility:** You will have at least two independent assessments by medical assistance in dying practitioners to determine eligibility; both practitioners must agree that you are eligible to receive medical assistance in dying. Each assessment can take approximately one hour.

The assessment may include:

- A review of your medical history, current medical issues and disease trajectory
 - An assessment of your ability to make decisions.
 - A review of your current medications.
 - A limited physical examination.
 - A detailed explanation of the medical assistance in dying medications and procedure.
 - An opportunity to answer any questions or concerns you or your family may have.
- c. **90-Day Minimum Assessment Period:** The law requires that at least 90 days pass between when an assessment deems a patient eligible and when medical assistance in dying occurs. More time may be required beyond 90 days to determine eligibility.
 - d. **Planning for Medical Assistance In Dying:** Once eligibility criteria have been met, the Provincial MAID Program will work with you to plan a date, time, and location, as well as any other details that are important to you. Medical assistance in dying provisions are provided Monday through Friday; generally two business days are required to organize all the details of the provision. Exceptions can possibly be arranged in discussion with the Provincial MAID Program.

10. Can I change my mind about receiving Medical Assistance In Dying?

Yes, you can change your mind and stop the process at any time up until the medications are given. You can either withdraw your request or change it to a later date.

11. What if my healthcare provider objects to Medical Assistance In Dying?

Not all physicians or nurse practitioners will choose to participate in providing medical assistance in dying, but they have a responsibility to continue to provide you with other medically required care until such time as their services are no longer required. They also must ensure that you have the contact information required to access timely information about medical assistance in dying and other end-of-life care options including a palliative care consultation and that you have been informed of the treatments, technologies, and supports available to relieve your suffering.

12. Where can the provision take place?

You can ask to receive medical assistance in dying wherever you live or receive care, including a hospital, long-term care home, hospice, palliative care facility or your home. Some facilities may choose not to provide medical assistance in dying or have limitations on how they provide it. The Provincial MAID Program will work with you to select a location where you can receive provision.

13. Is there a fee associated with this service?

There is no fee or costs for medical assistance in dying services if you have provincial health coverage.

14. If I choose to have Medical Assistance In Dying, will it impact my pension or life insurance?

It is recommended that you contact your pension and life insurance providers to answer your questions and provide you with specific information.

15. Where do I get additional information on Medical Assistance In Dying?

To speak with someone from the Provincial MAID Program call our toll-free number 1-833-473-6243 (MAID) - no referral is necessary.