



Preparing for Provision Day

Provincial Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) Program

Phone: Toll-Free 1-833-473-6243

Email: provincialMAIDprogram@saskhealthauthority.ca

www.saskhealthauthority.ca/your-health/conditions-diseases-services/medical-assistance-dying



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[saskhealthauthority.ca](https://www.saskhealthauthority.ca)

Preparing for the day of provision

Once you are found eligible for medical assistance in dying, you can begin to make some plans for medical assistance in dying. You can stop or put the process “on hold” at any time. Be patient and gentle with yourself and loved ones as you explore your wishes related to your death. Times of great love and togetherness will be mixed with times of deep sadness which is normal anticipatory grief.

The day you choose to have MAID is called provision day. Some people keep planning simple: choosing the date, time, place and who will be present. Others include more details including final rituals and wishes. You may find the [Provision Planning Checklist \(CS-PIER-0133\)](#) helpful. Do what is right for you and be flexible and open to changes. If the original plans no longer feel “right” or “possible”, allow yourself to change the plan. The Provincial MAID Program can support you and your family in planning and preparing for medical assistance in dying. **Please keep in mind that the date and time of provision needs to be organized with the Provincial MAID Program to ensure that requests can be carried out. A funeral home must be chosen before provision.**

It can be helpful to have someone who is aware of all your wishes to help organize and prepare the space on the day of your provision. They could assist with seating, meals, setting up music, or whatever is important to you. If your location is other than your home, the Provincial MAID Program can assist with communicating with the facility to support your needs and wishes.

On the day of your medical assistance in dying provision

The day of your provision will bring many emotions, feelings, and thoughts for you and your family as you prepare for death. Each person will have their own experience of being present at the death.

It is important for everyone to be kind and patient with each other. There is no correct response and you may have many emotions including feeling anxious, tearful, angry, relieved, sad, peace, restless and love. These responses are natural. It is okay to feel your feelings – it is okay to have tears or not.

Focusing on breathing in your body can sometimes help support you to be present.

Flexibility to do what is right in the moment is key. Family who choose to be present in the room may leave after death, while others may want to stay for a longer time. They may also feel that they need to step out of the room for a moment – remember if they do, they can quietly return at any time.

Everyone needs to make their own decision as to what is right for them in the moment.

Sometimes family are unable to be present for the death. Whether they are outside the room, in a different city, or in a different country, this distance does not lessen your ability to have deep connection and closeness through the spirit and love for each other. Technology also allows ways to join in without being physically present. The Provincial MAID Program can support you in exploring possible options.

What to expect at provision

Before Provision Occurs: Important and special cultural, or ceremonial rituals, readings or prayers related to death should be done before the arrival of the MAID team. The Provincial MAID Program will arrive 30 to 60 minutes before your provision. The social worker may also attend to offer support to you, your family, and the team. The nurse practitioner or physician will check your identity and make sure safeguards are in place. An intravenous line (IV) will be started for the medication. Family and friends will be asked to leave so that the MAID provider can get final consent privately. After consent is given, the Provincial MAID Program will step away to get the medications ready which takes about 10 minutes. This time allows private time together for final words and goodbyes. If more time is needed, please let the team know.

The right to change your mind: Remember, you, the patient, have the right to change your mind right up until the moment before medications are given. You can either take your request back (withdraw) completely or change provision to a later date.

The final moments before death: Family and friends may wish to sit close to you including lying or sitting on your bed, cuddling, holding hands or touching you – whatever feels right. Most people fall asleep and lose alertness quickly once the first medication is given. Families tell us they are often not prepared for how quickly this happens. Any final goodbyes to each other (thank you, I love you, I will miss you or a kiss or hug) should be stated before the first medication is started while you are awake. Family and friends may wish to continue to talk to you even after you are no longer awake. It is believed that hearing is the last sense to leave the body. Family and friends are encouraged to do what feels comfortable in the moment.

The administration of Medical Assistance in Dying: There are 4 medications given over approximately 5 minutes. This process will be briefly reviewed with the you and your family prior to starting the medications. Some of the syringes are large because of the amount of medication that is used. Between each medication, the IV line must be flushed with a saline solution. Most people fall asleep and lose alertness quickly. Death usually occurs within minutes. There may be breathing changes such as deep breaths and snoring which is normal. On rare occasions, a second IV may need to be started and a second set of medications given. Family and friends are encouraged to look at the face of their person, rather than watch the medications being given.

What you may experience— for friends and family: The moments after death can be difficult. Some family may choose to leave the room, while others may wish to spend time with the body, attending to special rituals, reminiscing, and saying good-bye. People will continue to feel many different emotions as they begin to experience the reality of their loved one's death. They should express their feelings in whatever way feels right remembering this experience is different for everyone. Be kind and supportive to each other. Everyone is doing their best in the moment.

What to expect at the moment of death – physical changes:

- Many people snore as they first start falling asleep. This does not mean they are in pain or otherwise suffering.
- The muscles in the body relax.
- The eyelids may remain slightly open and the eyes appear motionless with no movement or blinking.
- The jaw relaxes and the mouth may open.
- The skin colour becomes pale or yellow.
- The body temperature changes and the person feels cool to touch.
- Breathing and the heartbeat stop.
- The physician or nurse practitioner confirm death has occurred.

What to expect after medical assistance in dying – for friends and family:

- The Provincial MAID Program will leave the room to allow family time with their loved one's body to focus on important rituals, final goodbyes, and comforting each other.
- Once they are ready, a health care team member may remove medical devices such as needles, catheter, hearing aids and any jewelry that is not meant to stay with the person.
- Response times for the funeral transfer team can vary. Discussions about contacting the funeral home will happen before provision, with the Provincial MAID Program. If they wish a longer waiting period to be with their loved one, please let the Provincial MAID Program know.
- When the funeral home attendants arrive, they will move the body to a stretcher in preparation for leaving. The body will be placed in a special shroud (cloth) made for the purpose of transport. Friends and family can consider whether they wish to be present when the person's body is removed.

Bereavement support is available. If you would like more information or a bereavement package, please contact the Provincial MAID Program toll-free at 1-833-473-6243.

- A “Medical Certificate of Death” will be given to the funeral home. The certificate will state “drug toxicity” as the first cause of death and the medical conditions/diagnosis that made the person eligible for medical assistance in dying as the second cause of death. There is no rule that a coroner must be involved or an autopsy has to happen when someone has medical assistance in dying. However, in some cases a coroner does need to become involved depending on the medical condition/diagnosis that made the patient eligible for medical assistance in dying.
- The funeral home completes a registration of death with Vital Statistics which is needed for legal and financial affairs.
- The Provincial MAID Program will check in with family prior to leaving.
- At home, family can spend time with their loved one and attend to any special rituals.
A Provincial MAID Program member can stay until the funeral home arrives if the family asks them to.

The Provincial MAID Program is here to support you by calling
toll-free 1-833-473-6243 (MAID)

Family experiences of medical assistance in dying

Some people feel that a medically assisted death respected their loved one’s wishes (they got to decide how and when to die). They feel relief that their loved one’s suffering was over and that they died with dignity. They feel more prepared for the death by having time to talk through important issues with their loved one’s circle of friends and family, tell stories, resolve conflicts, celebrate, complete important tasks, say goodbye and appreciate the person prior to death.

Families also identify that the day of provision can be the “longest day” and that time seems to stand still as they wait for the MAID team to arrive. We encourage you to let go of time and not watch the clock. Be assured that the MAID team will arrive at the scheduled time. Death will happen and the time you have left remaining is precious. Consider special rituals that you may need to attend to or prepare for. Are there normal routines that you can experience with your person, such as having coffee or breakfast in their bedroom or watching a favourite movie or television show together? Give yourself permission to take small breaks, go out into nature, meditate, breathe, or have a good cry—whatever you need to do.

If you wish to consider making an organ donation or donation of your body

If you are considering donating tissue and organ or your body, you are encouraged to contact the appropriate organization as soon as you are able to discuss with them, even if you have not made a final decision. Some patients and families have expressed that they feel they have missed the opportunity for donation as the donation team became involved too late.

Tissue and organ donation: Tissue and organ donation may be possible following medical assistance in dying. If you are interested in further information, please contact the Saskatchewan Health Authority Donation Program at:

- St. Paul's Hospital at 1-306-655-0315 or call switchboard at 306-655-5000 and ask for the donation coordinator on call **or**
- Regina General Hospital at 1-306-766-3591 or call switchboard at 306-766-4444 and ask for the donation coordinator on call **or**
- You can also visit <https://www.saskhealthauthority.ca/your-health/conditions-diseases-services/tissue-organ-donation> for more information.

Donation of body: The Body Bequeathal Program is handled by the Department of Anatomy, Physiology, and Pharmacology in the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan. This program provides the chance to donate your body to medical education and/or science. Acceptance depends upon cause of death, condition of the body at the time of death as well as some operational restrictions. Please visit <https://medicine.usask.ca/departments/schools-divisions/biomed/body-bequeathal-program> for more information.

The Body Bequeathal Program can be reached by telephone at: 306-966-4075.

If you have made plans for tissue and organ donation or donation of your body please make sure the Provincial MAID Program know so that proper measures can be taken as needed.

If you would like to provide feedback to the Provincial MAID Program

The Provincial MAID Program is patient-focused, family-centered and is dedicated to providing excellent end of life care. An important source of learning is feedback from patients and families about what we are doing well and what we can do better. Feedback is welcomed at any time and will not impact the quality of your care or your ability to receive medical assistance in dying. We want you to tell us about your concerns right away. We will do our best to support a better experience for you and your family.

Please contact the Provincial MAID Program social worker or manager by calling
toll free 1-833-473-6243 (MAID).

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Healthy People, Healthy Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Health Authority works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Saskatchewan as the traditional territory of First Nations and Métis People.

PIER—Patient Information and Education Resource

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