



Medical Direction and Practices Board 2023 Update to New England Donor Services Reporting White Paper

Background

As far back as 2015, the Maine EMS Pre-hospital Protocols have referenced notification of New England Donor Services (NEDS) (formerly, New England Organ Bank) in the Death Situations for Emergency Responders Protocol (Grey section) and, in later versions, the Termination of Resuscitation Protocol (Red section). From July 2015 to July 2021, there were a total of five referrals to NEDS after scene death (Grey section) by Maine EMS providers and from December 2019 to July 2021 there were a total of four referrals to NEDS post termination of resuscitation (Red section) by Maine EMS providers.¹

The 2023 Maine EMS Protocols will require New England Donor Services notification by EMS clinicians for out-of-hospital deaths that meet tissue donation inclusion criteria.

More than 100,000 people in the U.S. are waiting for an organ transplant and every day approximately 17 people die because there aren't enough donor organs for everyone awaiting a transplant.² In Maine, since 1988, 2,072 individuals have donated organs and 1,701 individuals have received an organ transplant.³ At the time of this writing, approximately 260 people are awaiting kidney transplant in Maine, eight of whom have been waiting for five years or more.³

Approximately 450,000 Americans will require tissue transplants this year to improve or save their lives. One tissue donor can restore health and heal the lives of up to 75 people.

Approximately 2.5 million tissue transplants are performed each year. These gifts include corneas for the gift of sight for up to two people with corneal blindness; bones to prevent need for amputation and associated tendons used to rebuild joints; heart valves used to repair cardiac defects; arteries and veins used in bypass surgeries; and skin for burn patients and cleft lip and palate repair in children.

There is no change in the appearance of the deceased patient as far as donation is concerned, and all donors would still be able to have an open casket wake or funeral.

New England Donor Services

Referrals to New England Donor Services (NEDS) can be made by calling 800-446-6362.

Information about the decedent that will be requested includes, (1) Name and date of birth, (2)



date and time last known alive or declared deceased, (3) cause of death, (4) evidence of drug use, (5) known past medical history and medications, (6) number of IVs attempted/established and amount of fluid infused, (7) name and phone number of police department involved, (8) OCME notification and if case is accepted, (9) disposition of body, and (10) next of kin contact information (name, phone number, relation, best time to call).

Absolute contraindications to organ and tissue donation include, (1) obvious signs of decomposition, (2) last known alive time of 18 hours or greater, (3) evidence of IV drug abuse, and (4) known HIV or hepatitis.

Positive Outcomes in Organ and Tissue Donation

Grief is the anguish experienced after significant loss, usually the death of a beloved person. Grief often includes physiological distress, separation anxiety, confusion, yearning, obsessive dwelling on the past, and apprehension about the future. Intense grief can become life-threatening through disruption of the immune system, self-neglect, and suicidal thoughts. Grief may also take the form of regret for something lost, remorse for something done, or sorrow for a mishap to oneself.⁴

Understanding how organ donors' families recover from their grief can help organ procurement organizations improve consent rates and increase the number of deceased donor organs available for transplant. One study surveyed relatives of deceased organ donors and found that most respondents (84%) indicated that family support was the most helpful thing in dealing with their grief, followed by the support of friends (74%) and religious and cultural beliefs (37%). Most (75%) indicated that they agreed to donation so that something positive could result from their loss.⁵ Studies have demonstrated that early referrals for organ donation have resulted in an increase likelihood of organ recovery and organs transplanted per donor.⁶

The MDPB supports the work and mission of NEDS to save and heal lives through organ and tissue donation.⁷

For more information on organ and tissue donation, please refer to the New England Donors Services website (<https://neds.org>).



References:

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4. APA Dictionary of Psychology
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6. Am J Surg. 2014 May;207(5):728-33; discussion 733-4. doi: 10.1016/j.amjsurg.2013.12.017. Epub 2014 Mar 6.
7. New England Donor Services mission statement