

Medical Assistance in Dying:

Information for patients, residents, and clients of Northern Health (NH)

What is medical assistance in dying?

In Canada, medical assistance in dying refers to procedures in which a physician or nurse practitioner assists a patient, who wishes to voluntarily and intentionally end their life, by providing a lethal dose of medication. Sometimes, you may hear of medical assistance in dying referred to by the abbreviation MAiD.

Is medical assistance in dying legal?

The Supreme Court of Canada has decided that provisions of the Criminal Code which in the past prohibited medical assistance in dying are not in keeping with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The federal government has now enacted legislation that allows for physicians or nurse practitioners to provide medical assistance in dying for patients who meet specific eligibility criteria. It remains illegal for anyone to advise or recommend someone have medical assistance in dying.

What are the criteria to receive medical assistance in dying?

In order for you to receive medical assistance in dying you must:

- Be eligible for health care services in Canada
 - Be at least 18 years old;
 - Be capable of making decisions with respect to your health
 - Clearly consent to the ending of life without coercion or undue influence;
 - Have a grievous and irremediable medical condition, which can include a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability;
- Be in an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability;
 - Be suffering intolerably with no available treatments or relief that you consider acceptable; and
 - Be at a stage where natural death is considered to be reasonably foreseeable.

What is the process if I wish to receive medical assistance in dying?

- 1) You can request medical assistance in dying by speaking to the physician or nurse practitioner most responsible for your care or another health care provider, who will bring your request to the attention of your physician or nurse practitioner.
- 2) Your physician or nurse practitioner will discuss with you your concerns about your situation, and together with you and other colleagues ensure that you are aware of all of the services or treatments that are available to you. You are not obliged to accept any of these services.
- 3) If you wish to proceed and your physician or nurse practitioner is not able to provide you with direct assistance in medical assistance in dying, they will be able to direct you to someone who can, like another practitioner or the Northern Health MAiD Care Coordinator (contact information below).

- 4) Your request must be made in writing and signed by two independent witnesses. You can obtain the request form from your physician or nurse practitioner, the NH MAiD Care Coordinator, or the NH or Ministry of Health websites.

Professional regulations and the law require that two physicians or nurse practitioners are required to independently determine if you meet the criteria for receiving medical assistance in dying.

- 5) Once your request is completed, two physician(s) or nurse practitioner(s) will review the following with you:
 - a) your diagnosis and your prognosis;
 - b) alternative treatments including comfort care, pain control, palliative care, and hospice care;
 - c) the option to change your mind at any time about the request for medical assistance in dying.
- 6) Either or both physicians or nurse practitioners may ask for a specialised assessment to help them clarify their understanding if there is a concern that you might not be capable of making this very important decision.
- 7) One of the physicians or nurse practitioners who assessed your eligibility will be the “Prescriber”; that physician or nurse practitioner will order and administer the oral or intravenous medications to end your life.
- 8) There must be at least 10 clear days between the day your request is signed and the earliest day on which the medical assistance in dying can be provided. This is considered a period of

reflection. You may decide to wait longer, to choose an appropriate time for you. This 10 day waiting period can be shortened only when the two physicians or nurse practitioners agree that either loss of capacity to make a decision, or your death, is imminent.

- 9) Planning for MAiD will include whether and how you would like your family or other supports to be involved; if you would prefer to die at home or in a medical facility; if you would prefer oral or intravenous medications to be administered; and any other special requests or considerations you may have.
- 10) Immediately before the medical assistance in dying is provided, you will be asked again by your Prescriber to confirm that you wish to proceed.

The Prescriber will remain with you until your death is confirmed.

For further information on this medical care, or assistance in connecting you, or your primary care provider, with an appropriate physician or nurse practitioner, you may contact the NH MAiD Care Coordinator at:

maid@northernhealth.ca

Phone: 250-645-6417

Fax: 250-565-2640

More information is also available on the Northern Health website:

www.northernhealth.ca

and the Ministry of Health website:

www2.gov.bc.ca