

Further Preparation

Appoint a Health Care Agent

The Vermont Department of Health Advance Directive forms include a page for appointment of your Health Care Agent. For this role, choose someone you trust who can help you make decisions, communicate with your medical team, and speak for you if you become no longer capable of doing so.

Be aware that only you personally (not your health care agent) can request and administer medical aid in dying.

Record Your Values and Preferences

You can use your Advance Directives to provide guidance to your Health Care Agent and your medical team about what is most important to you. This is an opportunity to:

- Clarify your own thoughts about the care you would like in case of serious illness or terminal diagnosis.
- Help your team understand what is most meaningful in your life.
- Provide direction on how you would like your care to be managed.

Enrolling in Hospice

You have the option to enroll in hospice when you have a six-month terminal diagnosis. Hospice services can cover a range of needs including pain management and help with personal care. If you so choose, a hospice professional can be present for medical aid in dying. Speak with your doctor to understand more about what hospice can offer you.

Medical Aid in Dying Stories from Vermont

Our dad was determined to live to the end in a purposeful and meaningful way and that's what he did. Just knowing that he could choose the time to slip away peacefully gave him the strength for what he said were some of the deepest conversations of his life."

- Nancy and Betsy

"Maggie felt empowered. She felt relieved and calmer and glad that she had the option."

- Katy

"The gift is that I can go out while I can still tell my children that I love them."

- Dee

Go to PatientChoices.org for:

- ▶ Videos about medical aid in dying
- ▶ How to Talk to Your Doctor
- ▶ Frequently Asked Questions
- ▶ Links to Department of Health forms ...and more

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Plan Ahead for Peace of Mind

A Vermonter's Guide to Medical Aid in Dying and End-of-Life Decision Making



PCV is a Vermont non-profit 501(c)(3) organization focused on Medical Aid in Dying and End-of-Life Choice

Education ♦ Access ♦ Safeguarding Act 39

PatientChoices.org

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Empower Yourself to Make Thoughtful Choices Communicate With Your Medical Team and Those You Love

What are the End-of-Life Care Options?

If you have a serious illness or a six-month terminal prognosis, make sure you understand all your options. Ask your doctor to explain how these care options apply to you:

- Disease treatment options
- Palliative care
- Home health and hospice
- Pain and anxiety management
- Voluntarily Stopping Eating and Drinking (VSED)
- Withdrawing medical treatments that are no longer relevant or wanted
- Do Not Resuscitate (DNR/COLST) orders
- Medical Aid in Dying (MAID)

Several of these approaches can be used in parallel to deliver the most comfortable care.

What is Medical Aid in Dying?

Medical Aid in Dying (MAID) gives adults who are terminally ill and who are capable of making their own decisions the option to receive prescription medication to be self-administered to bring about a peaceful death at the time of the patient's choosing.

MAID is available to Vermont residents under Vermont's Act 39. MAID is sometimes called "End-of-Life Choice" or "Death with Dignity."

Who Can Use Medical Aid in Dying?

To qualify under Vermont's Act 39, the patient must:

- ✓ Be a Vermont resident 18 years or older,
- ✓ Have a terminal illness with six months or less to live,
- ✓ Be capable of making their own health care decisions,
- ✓ Be making an informed and voluntary request, and
- ✓ Be able to self-administer the medication.

What are the Steps to Request Medical Aid in Dying?

The patient must:

- 1 Make two oral requests 15 days apart to the physician who will write the prescription.
- 2 Make a written request in the form required. See Vermont Department of Health website.
- 3 Have a second physician confirm that the patient qualifies.

Based on experience, we suggest allowing two months for this process.

Act 39 is completely voluntary for patients and health care providers.

Once You Qualify

- Your doctor will write a prescription and provide you with instructions, including where to have the prescription filled.
- You may choose whether or not to take the medication. You may choose who you want to be with you if you use the medication, including your family, friends, hospice nurse or others.

What If...

- If your doctor has not prescribed under Act 39 before or if he or she has questions, knowledgeable doctors are here to help.
- Your doctor can check the PCV website under Resources for Doctors and contact PCV to be connected with a Vermont doctor who has medical aid in dying experience.
- If your doctor declines to assist you with the Act 39 process, we suggest that you ask for a referral to another doctor.
- If your doctor is from an out-of-state medical institution, he or she most likely will not be able to prescribe under Act 39. In this situation, ask for a referral to a Vermont physician, and allow extra time for the process.