

Organ and Tissue Donation and Body Donation Information Sheet

I. Organ and Tissue Donation

Statistics on organ and tissue donation

- In 2012 more than 8,000 deceased donors and 6,000 living donors made possible nearly 28,000 organ transplants in the United States.
- There were also 750,000 tissue transplants, including 46,000 cornea transplants. Other tissue transplants include bone, skin, tendons and ligaments, cartilage, arteries and veins, and heart valves.
- More than 118,000 people currently await organ transplants. About 18 people die each day due to a lack of available organs.
- Every organ and tissue donor can save and enhance the lives of up to 50 people.
- Donors may be of any age, as each case is considered individually. About 35% of deceased organ donors are over 50 years old, as are 60% of organ recipients.

How to Specify Your Wish to Donate Tissues or Organs

Organ and tissue donation uses a centralized statewide database, collection, and distribution system. When someone is close to death or has died, the database is automatically consulted to determine whether that person is a registered donor.

There are three ways in Oklahoma to identify that you want to donate organs and tissue after you die.

1. Check “Yes” on the application and renewal forms for either your Oklahoma driver’s license or state ID card.
2. Sign up directly with LifeShare, the organization designated by US Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate the organ donation in Oklahoma.
3. Complete the Anatomical Gifts Section of your Advance Directive.

Oklahoma Driver’s License or State ID Card: The application and renewal forms provide a box to check “yes” or “no” for being an organ and tissue donor. By checking the ‘yes’ box, you are automatically entered into the Oklahoma LifeShare database. Your License will have a notation that tells any health care provider that you have elected to be an organ donor.

If you check “yes”, the database registers that you are willing to donate for both transplantation and research, and that any or all organs may be donated. They will attempt to use organs and tissue for transplantation first, and will use them for

research only if transplantation is not an option. If you wish to be more specific about purpose or specific organs, you need to register directly with LifeShare as well.

Direct Registration with LifeShare: The LifeShare registration allows you to pick the purpose of donation: “Transplant” or “Both Transplant and Research”. You may also exclude specific tissue or organs that you do *not* want to donate. Entries that you make on the LifeShare website or written form will provide any detail to your initial driver’s license designation. The most recent information you enter, by whatever means, is associated with your record.

You may also register directly with LifeShare. In this case, even though your license or id card does not have the notation, you will be registered as a donor, and when the medical facility calls the registry, you would show as a donor. If registering directly, LifeShare may need to send you a postcard for you to sign and return, in order to complete the registration.

LifeShare Website registration link: www.lifeshareoklahoma.org/registry/

Telephone registration: 800-826-LIFE

Advance Directive: The advance directive also provides an opportunity to fine tune both the purpose of your donation and the organs and tissue you wish to donate.

The Advance Directive must be available to medical staff in order to be followed. If you are in an accident or are struck down by something very sudden, your advance directive may not be available to medical staff. Your healthcare proxy may also direct medical staff to follow your wishes as expressed in the Advance Directive.

Advice we have received is that you should not rely on the Advance Directive alone to be effective; registering through the state database is recommended.

The Donation Process

Hospitals and medical personnel are required by law to call the state organ donation registry (LifeShare in Oklahoma), as you approach death or upon your death, to see if you have registered as an organ donor. If you have not registered, but your advance directive is available, the instructions in your directive will be followed.

If you have not made your wishes known, your health care proxy may make decisions on anatomical gifts before and after your death. If you have not appointed a proxy, the law allows your family to make these decisions.

As soon as possible, either when your death is imminent or immediately after your death, the LifeShare team will evaluate your medical status to determine which organs and tissues are suitable for transplant purposes and steps will be taken as necessary to keep these organs viable. If transplant is not possible, they will evaluate suitability for research purposes. LifeShare is also responsible for removing tissues and organs, for identifying recipients of donations, and for arranging for transport. After organs and

tissue have been removed, the body is returned to the custody of the family for burial or cremation.

LifeShare Transplant Donor Services of Oklahoma pays for all procedures, tests or evaluations needed for donation. Funeral arrangements and costs remain the responsibility of the family.

Questions and Answers about organ and tissue donation

Today, a severe shortage of organs for transplantation exists in our country. Despite continuing efforts at public education, misconceptions and inaccuracies about donation still exist. Deciding against donation based on inaccurate information is a tragedy.

Q. If emergency room doctors know you're an organ donor, will they work as hard to save you?

A. If you are sick or injured and admitted to the hospital, the number one priority is to save your life. Organ donation can only be considered after brain death has been declared by a physician. Oklahoma has adopted legislation allowing individuals to legally designate their wish to be a donor should brain death occur.

Q. What does the term brain death mean?

A. Brain death is the total and irreversible loss of brain function, including the brain stem. Brain death means the person is dead. Types of injuries that can lead to brain death are head trauma (motor vehicle accident or fall, stroke, tumors in head, gunshot wound), intracranial bleed (aneurysm) and anoxic brain injuries (any injury that would not allow your brain oxygen) such as drowning.

Q. Does certain history of medical illness mean your organs or tissues are unfit for donation?

A. At the time of death, the appropriate medical professionals will review your medical condition and history to determine whether and which organs and tissue are suitable for donation. With recent advances in transplantation, more people have the opportunity to become donors.

Q. When do you become too old to be a donor?

A. People of all ages and medical histories will be considered as potential donors. Your medical condition at the time of death will determine which organs and tissue can be donated.

Q. Does my family have to pay for organ donation?

A. No. Once a physician pronounces you brain-dead and appropriate medical professionals review your case for organ donation, LifeShare Transplant Donor Services of Oklahoma pays for all procedures, tests or evaluations needed for donation.

II. Donation of Entire Body to Medical School

The process for donating a body to a medical school, such as OSU or OU, or to some other institution for medical research or education is separate and different from organ and tissue donation.

You should NOT register as an organ donor on the state database if you wish to participate in an institutional body donation program.

You must apply directly to the medical school or other institution and be accepted into their program prior to your death.* At time of death, the medical school will need to be notified immediately, by a doctor, family member, or other person who knows your wishes. You may include information about this in the anatomical gifts section of the Advance Directive, although it is not set up to handle this well, or attach the acceptance letter to your Advance Directive. OSU and OU also provide an identification card to carry in your wallet. You are encouraged to make sure that your family and doctors know of your wishes.

Once notified of your death, the institution will determine whether it can accept the body donation, dependent on their current needs, medical circumstances, and other criteria. Both OU and OSU can accept bodies within about 100 miles of Tulsa or Oklahoma City. There is no cost associated with body donation.

They will also cremate the body after it has been used, and will return the cremains to the family or arrange for other disposition if agreed to. It may be a year or two before the cremains are returned.

Finally, you need to have a backup plan for burial or cremation, in case the institution declines to accept the body donation at time of death.

OU Body Donation Program: 405-217-2424, ext. 4295

<http://www.oumedicine.com/collegeofmedicine/information-about-/office-of-medical-education-%28ome%29/willed-body-program>

OSU Body Donation Program: 918-561- 8446

http://www.healthsciences.okstate.edu/college/biomedical/anatomy/body_donation.cfm

*(OU will permit donation without prior registration, but prefers that registration has taken place.)