



Accessing voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia

Glossary of terms

The following terms are related to the voluntary assisted dying process in WA and can be used as a reference when reading the information sheets. For exact definitions you may need to refer to the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019* or other legislation as this glossary is a general guide only.

Key terms

Administering practitioner – the medical practitioner or nurse practitioner who administers the voluntary assisted dying substance to a patient. If the patient chooses practitioner administration, the coordinating practitioner can be the administering practitioner.

Administration decision – the decision a patient makes in consultation with their coordinating practitioner to either self-administer the voluntary assisted dying substance or have it administered by a medical practitioner or nurse practitioner.

Advance Health Directive – a legal document which can be made by an adult with decision-making capacity to record their decisions about future healthcare treatments. Treatment decisions recorded in a valid Advance Health Directive must be followed when the maker can no longer make or communicate their decisions.

Allied health professional – a person qualified to practise any of a wide range of health and related professions other than medicine and nursing (e.g. physiotherapist, speech pathologist, social worker, pharmacist etc). Allied health professionals are often part of a multidisciplinary healthcare team.

Authorised disposer – a registered health practitioner (pharmacist) who is authorised to dispose of the voluntary assisted dying substance.

Authorised supplier – a registered health practitioner (pharmacist) who is authorised to supply the voluntary assisted dying substance. In WA, Authorised Suppliers are part of the WA Voluntary Assisted Dying Statewide Pharmacy Service (abbreviated to SWPS).

Care navigator – a health professional working for the WA Voluntary Assisted Dying Statewide Care Navigator Service (abbreviated to SWCNS) who can provide information and assistance regarding voluntary assisted dying.

Carer – a person who provides personal care, support and assistance to another person who needs it because that other person has a disability or, has a medical condition (terminal or chronic illness) or, has a mental illness or is frail and aged.

Coercion – persuading someone to do something by using dishonesty, force or threats. The term abuse is intended to include coercion. Under the Act, a person's choice to access voluntary assisted dying must be free from coercion.

Conscientious objection – when a registered health practitioner declines to participate in a treatment or procedure due to sincerely-held religious, moral or ethical beliefs.

Consulting assessment – the independent assessment conducted by the consulting practitioner to determine if a patient meets the eligibility criteria for voluntary assisted dying. This occurs after a patient has been assessed as eligible by the coordinating practitioner during the First Assessment.

Consulting practitioner – a medical practitioner who independently completes a Consulting Assessment for the patient.

Contact person – the person appointed by a patient, who has made a self-administration decision, to carry out specific activities required by the law. It is a specific and defined role under the law and is further explained in the Being the contact person information sheet.

Coordinating practitioner – the medical practitioner who accepts the patient's First Request or the Consulting Practitioner for the patient who accepts a transfer of the role of coordinating practitioner.

Decision-making capacity – a person's ability to make decisions about their life. For the purposes of the Act, the decisions for which the person must have decision-making capacity are the request for access to, or a decision to access, voluntary assisted dying.

Eligibility criteria – the set of requirements that a patient must meet to access voluntary assisted dying.

End of life – the time leading up to a person's death, when it is expected that they are likely to die soon from an illness, disease or medical condition. A person at end of life will likely die within the next 12 months.

Enduring guardian – a person appointed to make important personal, lifestyle and treatment decisions for someone else, in the event that person becomes incapable of making those decisions themselves. An enduring guardian is not permitted to make voluntary assisted dying decisions on behalf of a patient.

Enduring request – lasting over a period of time. The Act requires the request for voluntary assisted dying to be made at 3 different points in time (First Request, Written Declaration and Final Request) to ensure the request is enduring.

Final Request – the final request for access to voluntary assisted dying that a patient makes to the Coordinating Practitioner after completing the Written Declaration. This is the last of 3 requests a patient must make to access voluntary assisted dying.

Final Review – the review of the request and assessment process that the coordinating practitioner must complete after receiving the Final Request.

First Assessment – the assessment completed by the coordinating practitioner to determine if a patient meets the eligibility criteria for access to voluntary assisted dying. If assessed as eligible, this would be followed by the Consulting Assessment.

First Request – the clear and unambiguous request a patient makes to a medical practitioner during a medical consultation for access to voluntary assisted dying. This is the first of 3 requests a patient must make as part of the process to access voluntary assisted dying.

First responder – a person whose job means that they are likely to be called to attend an emergency (e.g. ambulance officers, police, firefighters etc).

Health professional – a properly qualified person who practises one of a range of medical, nursing or allied health professions.

Healthcare worker – a person who works in a healthcare setting such as a hospital, general practice or residential care facility. This includes health professionals and any other person who provides health services or professional care services.

Interpreter – for the purposes of voluntary assisted dying, a person who holds a credential issued under the NAATI (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters) certification scheme, or a qualification in interpreting from an Australian Registered Higher Education Provider registered on the National Register of Higher Education Providers, or a qualification in interpreting from an Australian Registered Training Organisation listed on the national register of [Registered Training Organisations](#).

Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) – a legal document that is required to notify the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages that a death has occurred and the cause of the death.

Medical consultation – an appointment or meeting with a medical practitioner to seek medical advice or treatment.

Medical practitioner – a person registered in the medical profession (other than as a student). Also known as a doctor.

National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) – the national standards and accreditation body for translators and interpreters in Australia. Interpreters must be accredited (by NAATI) to provide services to patients seeking voluntary assisted dying.

Neurodegenerative condition – a condition characterised by degeneration of the nervous system, especially the neurons in the brain (e.g. motor neurone disease, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, dementia etc).

Nurse practitioner – a person registered in the nursing profession (other than as a student) and whose registration is endorsed as nurse practitioner. A nurse practitioner is a registered nurse with an additional masters degree who is licensed and works at an advanced practice level.

Palliative care – the care provided to a patient who has a life-limiting illness, disease or medical condition and their family to support their quality of life, often provided by a specialised health service.

Practitioner administration – the process whereby a patient is administered the voluntary assisted dying substance by the Administering Practitioner for the patient.

Practitioner/participating practitioner – a medical practitioner or nurse practitioner participating in, or considering participating in, the voluntary assisted dying process.

Registered health practitioner – a person registered under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Western Australia) Act 2010* to practise a health profession (other than as a student).

Request and assessment process – the part of the voluntary assisted dying process that involves the First Request, First Assessment, Consulting Assessment, Written Declaration, Final Request and Final Review.

Self-administer/self-administration – the process whereby a patient prepares and ingests the voluntary assisted dying substance themselves.

State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) – an independent body that makes and reviews a range of decisions related to administrative, commercial and personal matters in WA. SAT can review certain decisions related to the voluntary assisted dying assessment process.

Telehealth – the use of communication technology (e.g. phone call, videoconference etc) to provide health care over a distance.

Voluntary – when a person acts of their own free will. Under the Act, a person is not obliged at any stage of the process, even after completion of the request and assessment process, to take any further action in relation to voluntary assisted dying.

Voluntary assisted dying (VAD) – the legal process that enables an eligible person to access, self-administer or have administered to them, the voluntary assisted dying substance for the purpose of causing their death.

Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019 (the Act) – the legislation that regulates voluntary assisted dying in WA.

Voluntary Assisted Dying Board – the statutory Board established to ensure compliance with the Act and to recommend safety and quality improvements relating to voluntary assisted dying.

Voluntary Assisted Dying – Information Management System (VAD-IMS) – The online system that enables completion and submission of the required forms to the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board.

Voluntary assisted dying substance – the approved medication that will cause death.

Western Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Statewide Care Navigator Service (SWCNS) – the specific nurse-led service established to provide a statewide point of contact for information and assistance relating to voluntary assisted dying.

Western Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Statewide Pharmacy Service (SWPS) – the specific pharmacy service established to supply the voluntary assisted dying substance in WA.

Written Declaration – the formal written request for access to voluntary assisted dying that a person makes after being assessed as eligible by the Coordinating Practitioner and the Consulting Practitioner. This is the second of 3 requests a person must make as part of the process to access voluntary assisted dying.

The information presented in this information sheet is provided in good faith by the Department of Health to assist the community and health practitioners understand the framework for voluntary assisted dying in WA. While every reasonable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this information sheet, no guarantee is given that the information is free from error or omission.

It is the responsibility of the user to make their own enquiries and decisions about relevance, accuracy, currency and applicability of information in this circumstance. The information in this information sheet is not intended to be, nor should it be, relied upon as a substitute for legal, clinical or other professional advice.

Neither the State of WA nor its officers, employees, agents, agencies, instrumentalities, contractors, successors, assigns and others acting under its control shall be responsible for any loss or damage howsoever caused, and whether or not due to negligence, arising from the use or reliance on any information provided in this information sheet.

This document can be made available
in alternative formats on request for
a person with disability.

Produced by Health Networks
© Department of Health 2024

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.