

BUREAU OF ANATOMICAL SERVICES

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT DONATING YOUR BODY, AFTER DEATH, TO MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

- Q.** *Why are human bodies donated to the Bureau of Anatomical Services or one of its member institutions? A. They are an indispensable aid in medical teaching and research. The basis of all medical knowledge is human anatomy; human anatomy can be learned only by the study of the human body. Without this study, there could be no doctors, no surgery, and no alleviation of disease or repair of injury.*
- Q.** *How long does it take to become a registered donor? A. Approximately sixty days (2 months). If death occurs prior to the sixty-day processing period and the family still wishes to donate, they should contact our office, 504.568.4012, for procedures on completing a family donation.*
- Q.** *Is there an urgent need for body donations? A. The need is great and will be further increased by the demand for more doctors, dentists, nurses and other health service practitioners. A lack of anatomical subjects would necessitate a curtailment of vitally important teaching and research programs and thus have an adverse effect on the health and welfare of the population.*
- Q.** *Are there any restrictions on the condition of bodies accepted? A. We are unable to accept the donation when the remains have been autopsied, embalmed, an infectious disease is present (such as AIDS, hepatitis, sepsis or communicable disease, etc), jaundice is visibly present, are excessively obese (BMI >30), badly deteriorated/emaciated, if death isn't reported in a timely fashion (usually within 24 hours) or should the President of the Bureau deem the body unsuitable. You should have an alternative plan for the disposition of your body in the event it is not accepted by BAS.*
- Q.** *What is the time period before utilization of the body is completed? A. In some instances, donations will be utilized relatively quickly where others may require up to three or more years.*
- Q.** *What happens when the utilization of the donation is concluded? A. The remains will be cremated. If requested (in writing) to do so, the Bureau will return the cremated remains, in a suitable container, to the surviving relatives. If no such request is made, the ashes will be buried in a cemetery designated for the BAS with an appropriate ceremony.*
- Q.** *Can a donation take place against the wishes of the spouse or next of kin? A. Under the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act, your wishes take legal precedence over those of your next of kin. However, the BAS is not inclined to accept a body under conditions in which there is an objection to donation or dissension among members of the family who are legally responsible for final disposition of the body. Donors are advised to notify all persons likely to be concerned of their intentions and plans to donate their body. In this way, any difference of opinion can be resolved in advance of the time of death when decisions must be made in haste and under the handicap of grief.*
- Q.** *How soon should someone contact the Bureau of Anatomical Services to notify them of my death? The death should be reported IMMEDIATELY. Arrangements should be made with the Bureau of Anatomical Services within 24 hours of the time of your death.*
- Q.** *Must a person be of legal age to sign a donation form? A. Yes, a donor and all witnesses must be at least 18 years of age and there is no maximum age limit.*
- Q.** *Can the next of kin donate the body of a recently deceased relative to medical science? A. In some instances, donations may be made by the next of kin. However, since previously registered donors are given priority, the family or hospital must contact the BAS on an individual basis to see if there is a need at that moment of time.*
- Q.** *How are bodies that are donated utilized? A. Many bodies are used to teach medical, dental, nursing and allied health students basic human anatomy. Some are used by the faculty and residents to develop new surgical or diagnostic procedures. Others are utilized for Post Graduate course and continuing education for practicing Health*

Care providers. This is not comparable to an autopsy. No reports of any kind are furnished to the donor's family.

- Q.** May I alter, cancel or revoke my donation if I change my mind? **A.** Yes, at any time by notifying the BAS in writing of your desire to cancel your donation.
- Q.** What organization should my family contact to request a death certificate*? **A.** For insurance and banking purposes, a certified death certificate is required and can be obtained from the contracted funeral home (for an additional fee) or from:
Vital Records Registry
P. O. Box 60630 or VitalChek (877) 605-8562
New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0630 www.vitalcheck.com
(504) 593-5100
- * Allow six to eight weeks from the time of death for death certificate processing.
- Q.** Will my family or I be paid for my body? **A.** No. Payment to individuals for an anatomical donation is **NOT** permitted by federal and state laws/regulations.
- Q.** Will having the heart added to my driver's license (checking 'Yes' by the Donor question) ensure that my remains are given to your program? **A.** No. This office is not electronically linked to the Department of Motor Vehicles. Having the heart added to your license will not get your whole body donated to science. The heart/donor information on the back on your driver's license allows medical personnel to harvest designated organs from your body for transplant purposes, but usually under optimum conditions only.
- Q.** Are bodies acceptable if the eyes or organs have been donated to other agencies? **A.** Yes. Eyes and organs can be donated to other agencies, but it is the donor's responsibility to contact and register with those agencies. The telephone numbers for several agencies are listed below:
National Kidney Foundation - (504) 861-4500 (accepts other organs besides the kidneys)
Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency - (504) 837-3355
Southern Eye Bank – (504) 891-3937
- Q.** What if my death occurs away from my place of residence? **A.** An identification card, stating that the bequest has been made, is provided by the BAS. This card should be carried in your purse or wallet at all times (the donor would be wise to note on the card the name of the person(s) to be notified in the event of sudden and unexpected death).
- Q.** Must I be a resident of Louisiana to donate my body? **A.** No, you do not have to be a resident of Louisiana, however if your death occurs outside of Louisiana, please contact our office for information.
- Q.** What if my death occurs in another state? **A.** A prospective donor who lives outside of Louisiana may be accepted, if the family agrees to pay transportation fees and associated expenses. A completed Out of State agreement and donation form should be submitted to our office for consideration. (Copies of this form are available upon request.) Further, your family could attempt to donate your remains to a similar donor program in that state
- Q.** What if I should move to another state? **A.** The original bequest should be revoked in writing and a substitute arrangement be made with a similar program nearest your new home unless your family estate or survivors opt to honor your original request in which the family will pay the transportation expenses to transport your remains to Louisiana.
- Q.** Are there religious objections to donation one's body to medical science? **A.** The practice is approved and even encouraged by Catholic, Protestant and Reformed Jewish religious leaders.
- Q.** May a customary or traditional type of funeral service be held prior to the transfer of the body to the Bureau for Anatomical Services? **A.** We do not recommend that a traditional funeral service be held. If the family wishes to conduct a service, we suggest that they hold a memorial service.