**DONATION OPTIONS**

**ORGAN DONATION:** Organ donation can occur after someone dies. There are two ways to declare death:

**Brain Death:** When someone is brain dead, no blood or oxygen flows to the brain. The brain stops working and will not recover. When brain death occurs, a physician declares death and the patient is taken to the operating room with the ventilator still connected (the heart continues to beat because oxygen is still circulating in the body) and organs are removed.

**Cardiac Death:** A physician pronounces this type of death when the patient’s heart and circulation stop. Donation after Cardiac Death (DCD) is an option when a patient has no hope for recovery but has not progressed to brain death, and the family and medical team decide to remove the ventilator. As this brochure explains, the ventilator is removed, and if the patient dies within a certain time frame because the heart and circulation stop, organs can be recovered.

**TISSUE DONATION:** Both brain dead donors and DCD donors can donate tissue, if medically suitable. Many people who cannot donate organs can still give the gift of tissue. If a patient is not on a ventilator at the time of death, or if the patient dies before evaluation for organ donation is complete, he or she may be a candidate for tissue donation. All hospital deaths in the state of Michigan are evaluated for possible tissue donation. Families of patients who meet the criteria for donation are given this opportunity. The gift of tissue donation can enhance the lives of up to 50 people.

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“**If all my son needed to come home from the hospital was a kidney, I would want one to be available. So our best decision that terrible weekend was donation. It was the only positive thing to come out of our loss, knowing that although we lost our son, he saved so many others.”**

Susan McVey-Dillon, whose 14 year old son was a DCD donor

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**GIFT OF LIFE**

**MICHIGAN ORGAN & TISSUE DONATION PROGRAM**

**GIVE 50 OTHERS CAN LIVE**

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**Donation After Cardiac Death: An End of Life Option**

This is an extremely difficult time. Hopefully this brochure will provide answers to some of your questions about organ and tissue donation.

The option of donating your loved one’s organs after cardiac death may be presented to your family if it is determined that he or she has no chance of recovery and will not survive.

Donation after Cardiac Death (DCD) typically involves patients who are on a ventilator because of devastating and irreversible brain injuries, such as those caused by trauma, stroke or a heart attack. Potential donors may also have spinal cord injuries or end-stage lung disease. These patients may be so near death that treatment is futile, and your family may be faced with making end-of-life decisions.

This donation option is offered after the family and the medical care team decide to withdraw ventilator support. If your loved one has indicated his/her wish to become a donor through a document of gift (such as the Michigan Organ Donor Registry, a signed driver’s license or a donor card), a plan will be made with your family to honor your loved one’s wishes.

Donation allows patients to help others through transplantation. In some cases, DCD will fulfill the expressed wishes of the patient. Often, donor families speak of feeling comfort knowing that their loved one’s donation has helped others live. It is the ultimate gift when, in the midst of tragedy, a family decides to donate organs or tissue to save or enhance the lives of others.

**What is the Process?**

Following the decision to withdraw the ventilator, donation may be presented as an end-of-life option for your loved one. Gift of Life Michigan will obtain consent or acknowledgement from the family, then get a medical social history.

Gift of Life will evaluate the organs and tissues for suitability and placement.

Before the ventilator is withdrawn, families are encouraged to spend time with their loved one. The same end-of-life care is given to your loved one, regardless of donation options.

After the ventilator is removed, if death occurs (the heart and circulation stop) within the time-frame needed for organ donation, your loved one’s organs are recovered for transplantation. If death does not occur within the time frame needed for organ donation, your family can gather and be with your loved one until death.

**Answers to Commonly Asked Questions**

**Will I be able to stay with my loved one?**
You may want to be with your loved one when the ventilator is removed. You can arrange this with the medical team.

**How is my physician involved in the DCD process?**
Your physician will continue to care for your loved one throughout the donation process.

**Will my loved one feel pain?**
To keep them as comfortable as possible, medications are given during and after the ventilator withdrawal. After someone dies, they no longer feel pain. Organs and tissues are recovered only after death occurs and is pronounced by the physician.

**Which organs and tissue can be donated?**
Organs that can be donated include lungs, kidneys, liver and pancreas. Tissues that can be donated include corneas, arteries, veins, tendons, bone, skin and heart valves.

**Will donation prevent us from having an open casket?**
Donation does not interfere with having a funeral, including open casket services. The incisions used to remove the organs and tissues are closed like any surgery and will be covered by clothing.

**Will organ and tissue donation increase my family’s medical costs?**
No. Costs associated with donation are paid by Gift of Life Michigan.

**How long does the donation process take?**
The time for evaluation and the donation process varies. Gift of Life will communicate the plan and keep the family updated.