

**Questions and Answers (for Physicians & Health System Partners)**  
**Medical Assistance in Dying**  
**June 6, 2016**

**1. What is the status of legislation on Medical Assistance in Dying?**

The proposed federal legislation is still being considered by the federal government and the Senate.

As of June 6, 2016 and until federal legislation is in place, patients with grievous and irremediable medical conditions, which cause enduring suffering that is intolerable to the individual in the circumstances of his or her condition, can approach physicians to inquire about whether they qualify for medical assistance in dying. Physicians willing to provide the service will have to follow the policy guidance of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan. The policy requires the attending physician and another consulting physician to assess whether the patient's medical condition meets the criteria set by the Supreme Court of Canada and whether the patient meets the capacity requirement to give consent.

**2. What is happening in Saskatchewan on this issue?**

The Ministries of Justice and Health are following developments around the federal bill, connecting with provincial health system stakeholders and partners. Work is underway on standard provincial processes. However, the patient's circumstances would likely determine the process to some extent. In general, the patient's eligibility would be determined and then confirmed by a second practitioner, the patient would provide the required consents, and logistical arrangements would then be considered.

**3. What should I do if I receive a request for Medical Assistance in Dying?**

Physicians who are asked for information or access to Medical Assistance in Dying should first compassionately explore the patient's reasons for requesting this service. Assisted death should not be promoted or encouraged, since criminality provisions around counseling for suicide remain in force in Canada. Physicians who have questions about the legalities of their role should consult with the [Canadian Medical Protective Association \(CPMA\)](#).

**4. Are Saskatchewan physicians obligated to provide Medical Assistance in Dying?  
Can they decline?**

No physician is required to assess a patient for Medical Assistance in Dying or to perform Medical Assistance in Dying, in accordance with criteria. However, physicians should review the policy guidance developed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons for the College's expectations related to physicians' responsibility if their patient seeks information about Medical Assistance in Dying.

Physicians are not obligated to provide information to a patient about Medical Assistance in Dying or assess a patient for Medical Assistance in Dying if:

- it would violate their moral conscience; or
- they do not consider themselves properly trained to safely provide it.

**5. What are a physician's obligations to a patient if they cannot provide the service?**

If a physician elects not to provide the service, they must provide all other medical care required until a transfer of care has taken place. Out of respect for the patient's request, the physician must arrange timely access to information or resources, or offer the patient information and advice about all medical options available. An option may be to refer the patient to a contact person who can put the patient in touch with physician(s) who have indicated they may be willing to provide medical assistance in dying. This is consistent with the CPSS policy.

**6. If a physician agrees to provide the service, what is the process?**

A willing physician has to follow the policy guidance developed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan (CPSS) available through the CPSS website. The policy requires the attending physician and another consulting physician to assess whether the patient's medical condition meets the criteria set by the Supreme Court of Canada and whether the patient meets the capacity requirement to give consent.

**7. Where is additional support and information available?**

It is expected that physicians will have important questions concerning their involvement or non-involvement with these services. You are encouraged to contact your professional association for general information on medical assistance in dying.