



Information for Patients and Families Medical Assistance in Dying

Provincial Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) Program

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www.saskhealthauthority.ca/your-health/conditions-diseases-services/medical-assistance-dying



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General information about Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID)

The Saskatchewan Provincial MAID Program aims to provide clear information about medical assistance in dying (MAID) including the process for MAID to occur legally in Canada. MAID in Canada is available because of changes to the Criminal Code of Canada – changes to the law. Since MAID was first allowed in 2016, there have been several changes and expansions. Healthcare professionals are required to follow the current legislation/law for medical assistance in dying.

Please refer to this booklet throughout the MAID process. It has important information that will help you understand the steps of MAID and how the Provincial MAID Program works.

Anyone can call or email the program to ask for information about medical assistance in dying. However, according to the law, a request for MAID must come directly from the patient who is interested in MAID. People may believe they know what their loved one wishes, but the law does not allow for a person to ask for MAID on behalf of another person. For this reason, power of attorney and health care proxy have no decision-making abilities for medical assistance in dying.

To be eligible to receive MAID in Canada, a person must meet **all** of the following criteria:

- be at least 18 years of age;
- have a valid (active) health card from a Canadian province or territory or be eligible to receive a health card dependent on their residency in Canada;
- have the ability to understand what they are requesting and that it will end their life;
- not be under pressure from anyone to have MAID;
- have a grievous (very serious) and irremediable (no cure) diagnosis, disease or disability;
- be in a steady state of irreversible decline, meaning they will not get better;
- the illness, disease, disability or state of decline must cause the patient physical or psychological suffering that is unbearable and cannot be relieved; and
- be informed about their medical diagnosis and any available options of treatment to try to relieve the suffering, including palliative care.

Frequently asked questions

How do I know if I am eligible?

Assessors are doctors and nurse practitioners across the province who have additional practice and training to be able to assess patients for MAID. Only these assessors can determine eligibility. They will determine if you meet all the criteria and other safeguards required by the legislation/law. They will review your current health information to understand the medical conditions that have led you to ask for MAID.

You will not be able to have MAID if you do not meet all the criteria listed on the previous page. It may be that you are requesting MAID too early in your illness and you are not yet eligible. If found ineligible, you can reapply to the MAID program if your medical circumstances change.

A person has to be “capable” to request MAID. What does it mean to be capable?

- You understand and remember information needed to make decisions.
- You understand the consequences of your actions.
- You demonstrate the decision for MAID is yours alone and not influenced by others.

What does the Medical Assistance in Dying process involve?

The process for MAID requires several steps. Each step is explained to you by the MAID team.

- **Intake** – Information is gathered to start a file on you including data required for federal reporting purposes.
- **Information session** – The law and the details of medical assistance in dying is verbally explained to you. You are given the needed information to make informed decisions about MAID.
- **Written request** – The law requires you to complete a written request to be assessed for MAID. The program sends a written request form you that requires your signature and a witness signature.
- **Two Assessments** – The law requires two separate MAID assessors to complete assessments to determine if a patient meets the eligibility criteria for MAID. The assessors will meet with you in person or virtually (video call). Each assessor will review your current medical issues, medical history and disease path. They will assess your understanding of your illness and your ability to make decisions. They will ask you to talk about your experiences of suffering, of declining health, and of changes to abilities and enjoyment of life. You have an opportunity to ask questions.
- **Provision** - The term used to describe the date and time that you receive the medications that will cause your death. You choose the date and time you want provision and it will be coordinated with the practitioner’s availability to give MAID. You choose the location you wish to have provision but there are some restrictions. The Provincial MAID Program team will talk more to you about this once your eligibility is determined.

How long do I have to wait for my assessments?

Everyone's situation is different. How the provincial MAID program prioritizes and arranges assessments depends on several factors. The availability of assessors, your condition, location, and use of technology (video calling for example) may affect the timing of assessments. Assessors may need extra time to collect and review medical information, and consult with specialists to determine if you meet the criteria. This process can move more quickly when clear medical information is provided, including names of specialists involved in your care. You are asked to provide consent (verbally or via written permission) so the Program can get your medical information.

Can I write down my request for Medical Assistance in Dying in case I lose capacity and the ability to make decisions?

No. The law does not allow MAID to be included in an advance directive. You must be able to provide consent at the time of provision (when medications for Medical Assistance in Dying are given). Consent can be given in writing, verbally or through physical gestures. The practitioner must clearly understand and accept your consent at the time the medications are given.

What if I want to change my mind?

You do not need to continue with the MAID process if you change your mind. Your request for MAID can be withdrawn at any time, right up to the moment before the first medication is given.

Please let us know if you decide you do not want to continue with the MAID process. We ask that you let the MAID program know within 30 days of your decision to withdraw your request. You may access the MAID program again at any time. If you decide to return to the Program, we may require some updated information from you.

Is there a cost to me for MAID?

There is no fee or cost for medical assistance in dying services if you have provincial health coverage. However, there may be costs associated with the location of your provision or for transportation if you are moved to another location for your provision. These costs, if applicable, will be discussed with you at the time of planning your provision.

Other helpful information

The Provincial MAID Program understands the decisions surrounding MAID are personal. MAID is experienced differently by every person, family member and support person. If you or someone you know has asked for MAID, you may be experiencing a range of thoughts, feelings, and emotions related to the request. It is normal to reflect on your religious, spiritual, cultural, moral, and ethical beliefs and values. The Provincial MAID Program has social workers who can talk to you and your family and offer support during the MAID process, including provision. The social workers may provide bereavement follow up to families or close contacts following the death of their loved one. The Provincial MAID Program also offers support groups for patients and families throughout the MAID process; these groups are facilitated by the MAID Program social workers. Please contact the MAID Program if you would like to speak with a social worker.

End-of-life planning

The final days and hours of life can be one of the most stressful and the most special times in our lives. There is no easy way to experience this time and there are no road maps or instructions. Death is often difficult to discuss, but patients and families commonly report feeling relief once the subject is brought out into the open. Knowing the patient's wishes before and after death can be helpful to everyone. Do your best to be understanding of each other's journey, while also being kind and caring towards yourself .

Some things to consider are:

- funeral plans
- Last Will, estate planning, financial information
- arranging gifts or mementos for family and friends (letters, pictures, video messages)
- important conversations about death and dying with family members

The MAID social workers are available if you need help with your end of life planning.

Resources

Caregiving Benefits: [Caregiving Benefits Government of Canada](https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/caregiving.html)

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Caregiving benefits are available to eligible caregivers who provide care or support to a patient who is critically ill or injured or in need of end-of-life care. Caregivers must be family members or someone who is considered to be like family. See above link for details.

CPP Disability Benefits: [Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefits](https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/publicpensions/cpp/cpp-disability-benefit.html)

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The Canada Pension Plan (CPP) disability benefit is a monthly benefit you can get if you are under 65; have made enough contributions into the CPP; have a mental or physical disability that regularly stops you from doing any type of substantially gainful work; or have a disability that is long-term and of indefinite duration, or is likely to result in death. Note: There is a separate application form called Terminal Illness Application Form (ISP-2530A – terminal illness only) for individuals deemed to have a terminal illness. See above link for details.

Employer Sponsored Benefit Plans: If you have a benefits plan through your employer you may have coverage that can support you during this time. Please check with your employer.

Canadian Virtual Hospice: <https://www.virtualhospice.ca/maid>

This website has information about how MAID works and its emotional impacts.

Bridge C-14: <https://www.bridgec14.org/>

Information and peer support including groups for people considering MAID or supporting someone considering MAID.

MAID Family Support Society: <https://maidfamilysupport.ca/>

Peer support for individuals helping someone who is considering or planning for MAID.



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Healthy People, Healthy Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Health Authority works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Saskatchewan as the traditional territory of First Nations and Métis People.

PIER—Patient Information and Education Resource

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