

## **Organ donation is good end-of-life care.**

Many donor families have told us that they have found great comfort in the donation of their loved ones' organs. To ensure that the families' wishes are honored, and to maximize organ donation in your hospital, please keep in mind the following:

### **First Things First**

Before we can offer the option of donation, we first need to have the patient referred to us in a timely manner. Call referrals in early to Southwest Transplant Alliance (STA) at 1-800-201-0527.

- ▶ Refer all patients that have a neurological injury with a GCS  $\leq 4$ , or prior to an end-of-life discussion with the family, or if they ask about donation.
- ▶ We will come on-site to review the chart, obtain patient information, determine medical suitability, and discuss the "plan" with you (brain death testing, etc).
- ▶ If the patient is determined to be medically suitable, a STA Family Support Coordinator will consult with the hospital team in preparation for offering the option of donation to the donor family.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*Southwest Transplant Alliance exists to save and improve lives by providing organs and tissues for transplantation.*

*We distinguish ourselves by forging meaningful relationships with donor families and the communities we serve in order to realize every possible donation.*

## **VISION STATEMENT**

*Every organ and tissue donation opportunity is realized as long as the need exists.*



SOUTHWEST TRANSPLANT ALLIANCE  
A NONPROFIT CORPORATION

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Beaumont  
Corpus Christi  
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Tyler

*Giving the*  
**CARING FOR**  
**DONOR FAMILIES**  
*gift of life*



SOUTHWEST TRANSPLANT ALLIANCE  
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# Giving the gift of life

## Caring for Families to Make Organ Donation a Reality

Getting consent is a collaborative effort. We achieve the highest consent rates when the hospital staff meets the family's basic needs prior to the approach.

### Physiological Needs:

- ▶ Provide comfort items such as food, drink, tissue, and blankets.
- ▶ Encourage the family to sleep and eat (at hospital, home, or hotel).

### Privacy Needs:

- ▶ Give the family a private waiting room if possible.
- ▶ Provide access to a phone in a private area.
- ▶ Support the family so they may grieve in their own way. Understand differences.
- ▶ Respect their physical boundaries and assess each situation separately.

### Information Needs:

- ▶ Give frequent, truthful information. During crisis, most families need to hear things several times and may ask the same questions over and over.

- ▶ Tell the family what has happened, what has been done, and what is being done.
- ▶ Explain equipment and treatments.

### Comfort/spiritual Needs:

- ▶ Offer to call a chaplain or someone from the family's church or religious affiliation. However, every family may not want this.
- ▶ Listen. Be present.
- ▶ Reassure them that their loved one is not feeling pain.

### Time With Deceased:

- ▶ Allow as much time at the bedside as possible.

### Communication:

- ▶ Avoid using words like "life-support" or "vegetative state" because this can instill a false sense of hope.
- ▶ Messages given to the family must be consistent.
- ▶ Let them know that someone else is coming to talk to them about end of life decisions.
- ▶ It's okay to answer questions, but don't bring up donation.

### Closure Needs:

- ▶ Offer a "ritual" for saying goodbye such as a prayer, family gathering, etc.
- ▶ Offer keepsakes such as a lock of hair, fingerprint, etc.

- ▶ Ask the family member what they want to say or do to say goodbye.

## Offering Families the Option of Donation

By working together, we can prepare families to make end of life decisions and obtain consent in a sensitive manner with respect to their circumstances, views, and beliefs.

- ▶ Let STA be the only person to speak with the family regarding organ donation. Having STA's trained family support staff do the approach allows the family to identify the hospital staff as the individuals working to save their loved one.
- ▶ Families need to understand and accept brain death before donation is brought up. Experience shows families are not receptive to donation unless they understand and accept brain death.
- ▶ Do not mention the notification of STA to the family because their loved one may not progress to brain death or may be medically unsuitable.
- ▶ If families ask you about donation please tell them: "This may be an option for you. Let me make a phone call and I will have someone answer all your questions." Then call STA's 24-hour referral line immediately. 1-800-201-0527.

