

A Living Gift

Organ and tissue donation can help leave a legacy of life

Every day, thousands of people are faced with the decision of whether to donate their loved ones' organs. Many of them are forced to make this extremely personal choice just moments after learning that their loved one has been suddenly killed in a drunk driving crash.

While it can be a daunting decision, understanding the facts of tissue and organ donation can help.

Dispelling Donation Myths

According to the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), there are more than 85,000 people in the United States on a transplant waiting list. And every 16 minutes, a new name is added. Why the wait? The lack of viable organs may be due, in part, to many common myths associated with tissue and organ donation.

Myth: Emergency room doctors will not try to save my loved one's life if they know he or she will want to be a donor.

Fact: The No. 1 priority of medical personnel is saving your loved one's life. Transplant surgeons are called in only after all efforts to save his or her life have been exhausted and death is imminent or has been declared.

Myth: People can recover from brain death.

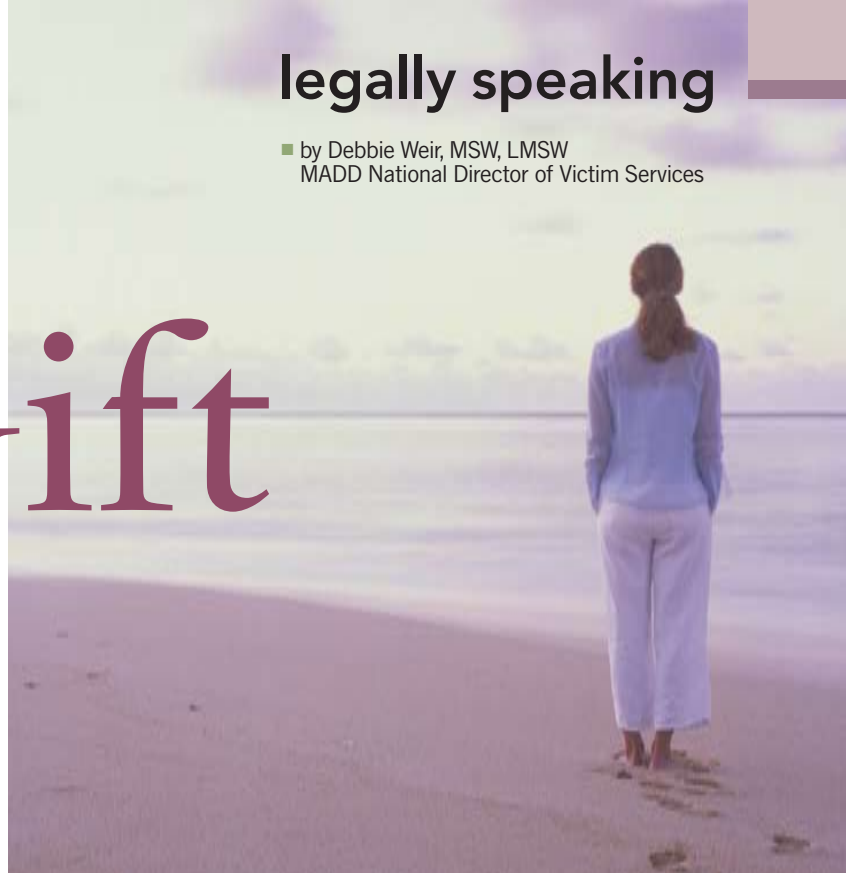
Fact: People can recover from comas, not brain death. Brain death is final.

Myth: My loved one is too old or has a medical history that would disqualify him or her from being a donor.

Fact: People of all ages and medical histories can be organ and tissue donors.

Myth: We will be charged for the procedures involved in donating organs.

Fact: Neither the donor's family nor his estate is responsible for any costs.



Myth: Donation will disfigure my loved one's body.

Fact: Organs and tissues are removed surgically and do not affect the appearance for funeral services.

Consider All Sides

Understanding the facts of organ and tissue donation is important when you're making your decision, but so is understanding how you and your family will react emotionally.

Giving another person a chance at life can be a comfort during the devastating events you're experiencing, but it does not take away the pain of the grief that results from death.

Take the time to openly and honestly talk with family members about your feelings regarding donation. It may help in considering what your loved one might have wanted.

Try not to feel rushed or pressured, but be aware of the time constraints that might prevent donating certain organs or tissues.

Most importantly, there is no right or wrong answer to organ donation. The decision should be based on your loved one's wishes and on what you feel comfortable doing.

Giving Others a Chance at Life

Although organ donation is often related to a sudden and tragic death, many donors and their families see the decision to donate as a gratifying one.

The knowledge of your choice can leave an affirmative legacy because organ donation is about giving others a chance to live.