



Information for Donation of Bodies

Texas law allows a person of legal age (18 years old) to will his or her body, without the consent of relatives, for the advancement of medical science, by signing a very simple statement to that effect. The enclosed forms are legal documents when properly executed. The department does not accept donations from anyone under the legal age. It is not necessary to prepare a will indicating your intention to donate, as the donation forms are sufficient in this regard.

The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso (TTUHSC El Paso) Paul L. Foster School of Medicine (PLFSOM) is one of the schools designated by the Anatomical Board of the state of Texas to receive willed bodies. The medical school depends heavily on donors for the continued high-level instruction available to our physicians here. We are deeply grateful to those whose interest in furthering medical education leads them to make this donation. Appropriate forms for making the declaration of the gift are enclosed. The forms should be executed and signed by two witnesses of legal age. The signed copies of the Donation Form and the Personal Data Form are to be returned to the Department of Medical Education at the address listed above. Legally, it is not necessary that the family be informed of the action. However, if there is no objection, it is recommended that this be done, as direct communication can prevent misunderstanding later. When the institution receives the donation forms, a card will be sent for the individual to carry in his or her wallet. The card has a statement of the individual's wish to donate to our program and who should be notified at time of death.

At the time of death, the next of kin or person in charge of the body should notify the institution to which the body is assigned and make the necessary arrangements. Our program utilizes a mortuary service to pick up donor bodies on our behalf. Arrangements will be made with our designated mortuary service and we will coordinate payment for pickup, embalming, cremation, etc. (family may incur transportation costs if outside El Paso County). If a funeral home or alternate mortuary company is contacted for any services (including pickup and transportation), these initial charges will be borne by the estate or next of kin. A funeral service may be held before the body is released to the medical school. If this is done, however, all funeral expenses must be paid by the family or estate. If a service is desired, the next of kin should call the funeral director, who will arrange for the services. Additionally, we should be contacted so we can speak to the funeral director to ensure the donor body is handled appropriately such that we may still benefit from accepting the donation.

Donor cadavers from which eyes have been removed for cornea transplants are acceptable. It should be pointed out that prompt and special preparation of the eyes is generally needed. The Department of Medical Education plays no role in the donation of eyes or organs. If organs are donated or an autopsy is performed on the body, this greatly reduces the usefulness and these bodies are not accepted. Nor are we able to accept bodies that have been mutilated, decomposed, harbor contagious organisms, have a weight that is not proportional to height or are at a distance unacceptable to the school. You may contact us for further donation acceptability criteria.

Unless otherwise specified by the family, the normal procedure for disposition of a body upon completion of anatomical study is cremation with subsequent burial. Request for any special arrangements should be made in writing at the time the body is brought to the PLFSOM; there will be a charge for the return of ashes for all donations received on or after January 1, 2004. The request for the ashes to be returned must be made at the time the body is delivered to the PLFSOM and the fee paid at the time of delivery. The time between donation and receipt of ashes varies and depends upon several factors, but the approximate wait is around two years from date of death. It should be understood that this is an approximation. Though every effort will be made to return the ashes in a timely manner, it is the responsibility of our program to maximize the benefit of the gift. This means that we cannot expedite the donation process.

The donor may revoke the gift at any time by notifying the Department of Medical Education and destroying the donation forms. Please keep us informed of any changes. (e.g. address, name) on the donation form.