

District of Columbia Death with Dignity Act

2017 Summary



Death with Dignity 2017

Introduction

The District of Columbia Death with Dignity Act of 2016, DC Law 21-182, was effective on February 18, 2017 and administrative rules were issued on June 6, 2017. The Act establishes a process by which competent terminally ill residents of District of Columbia can legally obtain a physician's prescription for drugs to end their life in a humane and peaceful manner. Terminally ill patients must be District of Columbia residents who have been medically confirmed to have less than six months to live.

Program Development

The DC Department to Health (DC Health) is the agency to regulate and oversee the Death with Dignity process. The Department's primary responsibilities include providing educational resources about the Death with Dignity process and clarifying the requirements for physicians, patients and pharmacists. DC Health developed three education modules: patients, physicians and pharmacists on the *Death with Dignity* requirements as delineated in the ACT.

The District's initial steps included, launching a dedicated web site <https://dchealth.dc.gov/page/death-dignity-act-2016> with instructions, resources and forms for terminally patients and health care professionals. DC Health developed an electronic system to collect information from District of Columbia residents that elect to partake in the *Death with Dignity* option. The infrastructure allows physicians the ability to notify DC Health on line when a patient has submitted a written, "Request for Medication to End My Life in a Humane and Dignified Manner". In addition the planned electronic system is designed to capture reporting requirements in accordance with the Death with Dignity Act of 2016 §7 Medical record documentation requirements and §8 Reporting requirements.

Educational Modules

DC Health created three educational modules outlining the responsibilities of physicians, patients and pharmacists related to the District of Columbia Death with Dignity Act of 2016. You can review these modules at the following links:

- [Patient Education Module](#)
- [Physician Education Module*](#)
- [Pharmacist Education Module](#)

(*Physicians are encouraged to review the [Physician Education Module.](#))

<https://dchealth.dc.gov/page/death-dignity-act-2016>

Participation Summary

For the period of June 6, 2017 to February 18, 2018, there were no patients registered with the District of Columbia's Death with Dignity program.

Resources:

Death with Dignity Act of 2016, DC Law 21-182

https://dchealth.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/doh/page_content/attachments/Death%20With%20Dignity%20Act.FINAL_.pdf

Compassion and Choices

<https://www.compassionandchoices.org/in-your-state/district-of-columbia>