

Frequently Asked Questions about Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID)

What is MAID?

- MAID is the term used for Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) or Physician Assisted Death
- There are 2 types of MAID available to Canadians. They include where a physician or nurse practitioner:
 - directly administers a substance that causes death, such as an injection of a drug - this is commonly called voluntary euthanasia
 - gives or prescribes a drug that is self-administered to cause death - this is commonly known as medically-assisted suicide

Is this legal in Canada?

- MAID can only be legally provided by physicians and nurse practitioners. Federal legislation, which passed in June 2016, guides how medical assistance in dying can be provided. It outlines the criteria for patient eligibility, such as having a grievous and irremediable medical condition, and requires certain safeguards to be followed, such as the patient providing written consent and having two clinicians assess a patient's eligibility.
- The Ontario government proposed *Medical Assistance in Dying Statute Law Amendment Act* aligns with the federal medical assistance in dying legislation and will address areas that fall under provincial legislation. It has passed second reading.

What is the cost to the patient of MAID?

- Medical assistance in dying is an insured service under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) and drugs required for medical assistance in dying are available at no cost.

Do we provide MAID at Hospice Care Ottawa?

- Not at this time.
- The Board of Directors for Hospice Care Ottawa have not formally passed a policy regarding MAID services but instead have approved an interim approach which is being evaluated regularly.
- The interim approach is to support the position of the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association (CHPCA) which states:
 - Hospice palliative care does not include physician assisted death.
 - Hospice palliative care does not hasten or prolong death.
 - Hospice palliative care strives to end suffering not life.
 - Canadians need universal access to hospice palliative care including good pain and symptom management.
 - All patients deserve access to information about end-of-life options, including physician-assisted death.
- In addition the Board accepted the following recommendations as part of Hospice Care Ottawa's approach:
 - We ensure that people requesting MAID and who are appropriate for hospice will be cared for with dignity and respect whether they chose to be transferred to another location for MAID or not
 - Palliative sedation becomes an option for those in intractable pain and can be agreed upon before needed (and before any delirium) by patient
 - Bereavement and grief support will be offered to family and loved ones even after the patient has been transferred to another site for MAID.

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If a patient tells me they want MAID – what can I say?

- As a staff or client care volunteer with Hospice you can tell them our interim policy is not to provide MAID. However it is important that you let them know that we can provide information about how they can access MAID if they wish.
- Inform the team leader, Executive Director and/or Medical Director if you receive this request and we will follow up.
- If they are able, you can also refer them to the Medical assistance in dying and end-of life decisions website in Ontario - [Ontario MAID decision-making](#)

If a patient expresses that they want to end their life can I tell them about MAID?

- Before offering MAID it is best to explore all hospice palliative care options. If you are asked this question consider probing to find out what is meant e.g. “When you say you want to end of life what do you mean?” If the person uses the term MAID or something similar then feel free to discuss. If not review the care we provide at Hospice Care Ottawa and refer him to his physician for other questions.

What is palliative sedation and how is it different than MAID?

- Palliative sedation therapy (PST) is offered when the intention or goal of treatment is to achieve sedation in a patient who is at the end of life, has a symptom that cannot be controlled, and when there is a lack of other methods for palliation within an acceptable time frame and without unacceptable adverse effects. Medication is given is sometimes the same as medication already in use, but at different doses.
- PST should not be confused with sedation that comes from treatment of a symptom or problem such as delirium.
- The important difference between offering MAID and palliative sedation is that the intent of palliative sedation is not to hasten death but to relieve uncontrolled symptoms.

Since MAID is not provided at Hospice Care Ottawa, how do they access the services?

- All requests for MAID should be referred to your team leader, Executive Director and/or Medical Director. The flow sheet attached outlines the steps for referral.
- At Hospice Care Ottawa we will continue to provide care to those patients requesting MAID.
- If the assessments have been completed and approvals met, we work with the team at The Ottawa Hospital (TOH) to transfer the patient either to the hospital or home for the procedure.
- The process from application to procedure can take 3-4 weeks. However the TOH has put in place an expedited process for special cases where patients are at risk of being too late for MAID due to declining mental capacity or medical deterioration.

Where can I get more information?

- A binder has been prepared with information for all staff on MAID and includes:
 - HCO Interim Policy
 - Background
 - College Statement and policies
 - Clinician forms and process
 - Government News Releases
 - CHPCA Background