

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MEDICAL AID IN DYING

Medical Aid in Dying Authorized in 6 States

Oregon, 1994 by ballot initiative

Washington, 2008 by ballot initiative

Montana, 2008 by court ruling

Washington, DC's Death with Dignity law went into effect on February 18, 2017.

Vermont, 2013 through legislation

California, 2015 through legislation

Colorado, 2016 through ballot initiative

The Evidence from Oregon

Since Oregon's Dignity Law passed in 1997:

- 1,749 received prescription
- 1,127 took the medication
- 622 didn't (35.5%)
- Of those who have used Oregon's Death with Dignity law:
 - 93.4% died in their own homes
 - 90.2% enrolled in hospice
 - 93% involved family in their decisionmaking

Source: Oregon Health Authority, *Oregon Death with Dignity Act: Data Summary* 2016, Feb. 10, 2017.

There has been no attempt to amend, fix, or expand medical aid in dying legislation since adoption of the original Oregon model, in place for over 20 years.

Aid in Dying Improves End of Life Care for Everyone

Each year, the Center to Advance Palliative Care releases a "report card" – how states are doing in terms of access to palliative care in America's hospitals. 4 out of 5 of the states where Aid in Dying is authorized received an "A." New York received a B with 78.1 points. We can do better.

Source: Center to Advance Palliative Care, *America's Care of Serious Illness: 2015 State-By-State Report Card on Access to Palliative Care in Our Nation's Hospitals*, available at <https://reportcard.capc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/CAPC-Report>

Do People Living with Disabilities Oppose Aid in Dying?

People living with disabilities support the notion that individuals should have the right to choose aid in dying by clear majorities, and often in the same percentages as the general voting population. (2014 Purple Poll of voters in MA, NJ, and CT; Harris Poll 2001). There is an increasing level of support among people living with disabilities and the organizations that represent them:

- Disability Rights Legal Center
- Legislative Coalition for People with Disabilities supports Utah's End of Life Options Act

What about People of Faith?

74.8% of New York voters who identify as Catholic support aid in dying, and even among those who attend church weekly or more than once a week, that number was still 61%. Over 2 dozen diverse faith leaders have signed on to a letter in support of the legislation to NY lawmakers, with more joining every week. When Governor Jerry Brown, a Catholic who had trained as a Jesuit priest, signed CA's End of Life Options Act, this is what he said:

"In the end, I was left to reflect on what I would want in the face of my own death. I do not know what I would do if I were dying in prolonged and excruciating pain. I am certain, however, that it would be a comfort to be able to consider the options afforded by this bill. And I wouldn't deny that right to others."

A Majority of New Yorkers and Doctors Support Medical Aid in Dying as an Option

In a 2015 Eagle Point Strategies poll of 1,000 randomly selected New York State voters, 77% said they supported allowing individuals to choose aid in dying; when they learned more about the pending legislation, that number grew to 81%. Support held steady across region, religion, and party affiliation.

Responding to a MedScape survey of 17,000 physicians, doctors responded to the statement: “Patients with an ‘incurable and terminal’ disease should have the option to choose death with dignity, also known as the medical practice of aid in dying” in the following way:

	2010	2014	2016
YES	46%	54%	57%
NO	41%	31%	29%
DEPENDS	14%	15%	14%

Increasing Numbers of Professional Associations Support Giving Individuals the Right to Make Their Own End-Of-Life Decisions

Professional associations in support

American Public Health Association
American Medical Student Association
American Medical Women’s Association
American College of Legal Medicine
National Association of Social Workers
Denver and Boulder, CO Medical Associations
New Mexico Hospice & Palliative Care Association

Professional associations taking a neutral position

American Academy of Hospice & Palliative Medicine
New York State Academy of Family Physicians
California Medical Association
Colorado Medical Association
American Pharmacists Association
American Psychological Association
American Society of Health-System Pharmacists
Oncology Nursing Society
Older Women’s League (OWL)
Hospice & Palliative Care Associations in:
--California
--Missouri
--Vermont

The AMA decided this summer to re-examine its position on aid in dying.

More and More New York Stakeholders Support Aid in Dying

Statewide Senior Action Council
Breast Cancer Coalition of Rochester
MPAC-NY (Mobilizing Preachers & Communities)
Housing Works

ACT UP-NY
Harlem United
Secular Coalition of America-New York Chapter
Voters for Change-ADK



For more information, contact Compassion & Choices at NY@compassionandchoices.org