

## MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING (MAID)

Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) is a health care service that provides people who are experiencing intolerable suffering due to a grievous and incurable medical condition the option to end their life with the assistance of a doctor or nurse practitioner. This only occurs at the individual's request.

To be eligible for MAiD, a person must meet all the following criteria:

- They must be eligible for Canadian-funded health care (e.g., BC's Medical Services Plan)
- They must be 18 years or older and capable of making decisions about their health
- Their decision to request MAiD must be voluntary
- They must have given informed consent for MAiD after being informed of all the options available (e.g., palliative care)
- They must have a grievous and irreversible medical condition

To be considered to have a "grievous and irreversible" medical condition, a person must be experiencing all the following:

- A serious and incurable illness, disease or disability
- An advanced state of decline that cannot be reversed
- Enduring physical or psychological suffering as a result of the condition that is intolerable to them and cannot be relieved under conditions that they consider acceptable.

## MAID AND CHRONIC PAIN

One in four Canadians live with chronic pain, a condition that affects both physical and mental health, inhibits work, play, relationships and overall quality of life. According to the Second Annual Report on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada, 57.4% of people who received MAiD in 2020 reported inadequate control of pain.

MAiD first became a legal health care service in Canada in 2016. At that time, only people whose death was considered to be "reasonably foreseeable" were eligible to receive MAiD. With the introduction of Bill C-7 in 2021, those without a "reasonably foreseeable" death became eligible,

making it possible for adults with “grievous and irreversible” chronic pain the option to request MAiD.

Choosing to access MAiD is a deeply personal decision that should only be made after being informed of all other resources and treatment options available. It is intended for people who have exhausted all treatment options to manage the physical and emotional suffering caused by their condition.

Canada must improve its systems of care and support to ensure people with pain do not feel the need to access MAiD due to geographic, financial or other barriers to accessing effective care.

## WHY PEOPLE CONSIDER MAiD

Each person considering MAiD has their own unique perspective and experience. Common considerations include the degree to which a person can engage in activities they find meaningful, such as being able to do things that are important to them or that make life enjoyable, the degree of autonomy or dignity they are able to experience, and symptoms including pain that cause enduring physical and emotional suffering.

## PROCESS

There are small differences in the process to request MAiD between each of BC’s Health Authorities, but the process follows similar steps.

1. The person requesting MAiD must complete a request for MAiD form, which can be found on each Health Authority’s website. A doctor’s or specialist’s referral is not needed to apply for MAiD, and individuals can apply directly to their Health Authority’s MAiD team. A witness must be present when signing the form. This witness can be a friend, neighbour, someone involved in the applicant’s care, etc. However, they cannot benefit from the person’s death in any way (such as being included in their will).
2. Two medical professionals (physicians or nurse practitioners) will meet separately to assess if the individual fits the criteria for MAiD. Both practitioners must agree. If both practitioners agree the individual meets all the criteria for MAiD, and are capable of making the decision, they will then determine if the applicant’s natural death is foreseeable or not. If the practitioners believe that a natural death is foreseeable, there is no waiting period before MAiD can occur. If natural death is not foreseeable, there is a 90-day waiting period from the date of their first eligibility assessment before MAiD can

occur. During this 90-day waiting period, the MAiD assessors must consult with an expert in the client's medical condition if neither of them is an expert in that medical condition themselves.

3. At any time during this process, the individual can change their mind.

## HOW TO SUPPORT A LOVED ONE WHO IS CONSIDERING MAiD

When a loved one is considering MAiD or is in the process of applying for MAiD, it can be difficult to know how to support them. You may also feel many different emotions as you process the news. It is important that you reach out to resources that can support you so that you in turn can support your loved one who is considering MAiD.

## RESOURCES

### **MAiD Family Support**

[maidfamilysupport.ca](http://maidfamilysupport.ca)

A peer support network where you can speak to someone who has experienced the loss of a loved one through MAiD and find resources on grief and loss.

### **The Kinwood Guide to MAiD Preparation (for families and loved ones)**

[kinwood.ca/medical-assistance-in-dying](http://kinwood.ca/medical-assistance-in-dying)

A guide on how you can prepare and support a loved one through the MAiD process and how to cope afterwards.

### **Canadian Virtual Hospice**

[www.virtualhospice.ca/maid](http://www.virtualhospice.ca/maid)

MAiD information for clients, families and practitioners.

Information sheet: [www.virtualhospice.ca/maid/media/yafpybhp/maid-individuals-and-families.pdf](http://www.virtualhospice.ca/maid/media/yafpybhp/maid-individuals-and-families.pdf)

### **Kids' Grief**

[kidsgrief.ca/mod/lesson/view.php?id=281&pageid=621](http://kidsgrief.ca/mod/lesson/view.php?id=281&pageid=621)

Information on how to speak about MAiD with children.

### **Bridge C-14**

[www.bridgec14.org](http://www.bridgec14.org)

Peer support for families of those who have had a medically assisted death.

## MAID CARE COORDINATION CENTRES

These centres provide support, information and guidance on the process of a MAiD request. This is also where MAiD request forms can be found and submitted. Individuals do not need to find their own practitioners for the assessment. The MAiD Care Coordination Centres can refer individuals to MAiD assessors.

### **Fraser Health**

Phone: 604-587-7878

[www.fraserhealth.ca/health-topics-a-to-z/end-of-life-care/medical-assistance-in-dying#.ZCr3kcrMK3C](http://www.fraserhealth.ca/health-topics-a-to-z/end-of-life-care/medical-assistance-in-dying#.ZCr3kcrMK3C)

### **Interior Health**

Phone: 250-469-7073

[www.interiorhealth.ca/health-and-wellness/palliative-and-end-of-life-care/medical-assistance-in-dying](http://www.interiorhealth.ca/health-and-wellness/palliative-and-end-of-life-care/medical-assistance-in-dying)

### **Island Health**

Phone: 250-727-4382

[www.islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/medical-assistance-dying/medical-assistance-dying](http://www.islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/medical-assistance-dying/medical-assistance-dying)

### **Northern Health**

Phone: 250-645-8549

[www.northernhealth.ca/health-topics/medical-assistance-dying-maid](http://www.northernhealth.ca/health-topics/medical-assistance-dying-maid)

### **Vancouver Coastal Health**

Phone: 604-875-4249

[www.vch.ca/en/service/medical-assistance-dying](http://www.vch.ca/en/service/medical-assistance-dying)

### **Provincial Health Services**

Phone: 604-875-4249

[www.phsa.ca/health-info/medical-assistance-in-dying](http://www.phsa.ca/health-info/medical-assistance-in-dying)

### **First Nations Health Authority**

Contact: [maid@fnha.ca](mailto:maid@fnha.ca)