



October 11, 2018

DHDTTC DAL 18-12

Dear Chief Executive Officer:

In 2017, 470 New Yorkers died waiting for an organ to become available. Right now, there are approximately 9,500 New Yorkers waiting for an organ transplant. The purpose of this letter is to request your commitment and leadership in helping us address the severe shortage of organs available for transplantation, resulting in the preventable deaths of New Yorkers. You, your facility, and the community you serve, can make a difference.

Every day, your facility cares for patients living with diseases that can lead to organ failure (such as diabetes, hypertension, liver and cardiopulmonary diseases) and the need for an organ transplant.

A successful hospital organ donation program is multi-faceted, but it all starts with you, the Chief Executive Officer, and your Board of Directors. I challenge you to make it an organizational priority to improve organ donation in your facility and increase community awareness of the need for organs. You and other leaders in your organization can create an institutional culture of donation by encouraging organ donation as a core organizational value that is pivotal to accomplishing the mission of your facility.

Partnership, collaboration, outreach and education are key. Core partners in these efforts are your local recovery agencies, specifically your organ procurement organization (OPO), eye and tissue banks, and the transplant centers in your region. Provider associations, such as the Greater New York Hospital Association (GNYHA), Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS), Iroquois Healthcare Association, as well as community groups, associations and providers, and educational and religious organizations are also critical partners.

Components of a robust program include:

1. Leadership

- Engage medical staff leadership, especially in the critical care and emergency medicine departments, in the donor identification and management process.
- Participate in the NYS Collaborative (Collaborative) to increase organ donation in your area. The Collaborative helps facilities implement best practices for early identification of all potential donors, assists hospitals in communicating with families and loved ones of potential donors, makes early referrals, and improves donor management. Medical Directors should contact their local OPO to get involved.

2. Education and Awareness

- Educate all facility staff, patients, and the community about the need for organs, how to become an organ donor, and provide low threshold opportunities to enroll in the New York State Donate Life Registry (NYSDLR).
- Work with your OPO on obtaining or developing promotional materials and hold NYSDLR enrollment and press events;
- Post information about organ, eye and tissue donation and links to the NYSDLR (www.donatelife.ny.gov) on your external and internal websites; and
- Incorporate organ donation education and enrollment information in new hire orientation, staff newsletters, and other human resources training and materials.

3. Institutionalization and Visibility

- Discuss organ donation and organ donor status with patients during primary care visits;
- Provide organ donor education and registration materials in admission and discharge packets;
- Establish policies and protocols, including reminders, to identify all potential donors during the everyday operations of your facility and provision of care (e.g. during rounds, at change of shift, etc.), and make early referrals to your OPO; and
- Recognize and celebrate donors, their families, and those who receive their gifts.

4. Compliance

- Adhere to state and federal rules concerning the “routine referral” of all deaths and imminent deaths to recovery agencies (10 NYCRR Part 405.25 and 42 CFR Part 121).
- The laws requiring routine referral have been in effect for twenty years, yet there continues to be lack of clarity about what “imminent death” is and when referrals should be made. Hospitals should use this as an opportunity to examine their current system of referrals with the OPO, using data on hospital referral rates relative to eligible deaths to identify opportunities for improvement. Reviewing data and identifying opportunities for improvement should be a continuous process.

Thank you in advance for taking your place among the health care leaders that will help us meet this critical public health need.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the New York State Department of Health Organ Donation and Transplant Program at 518-402-1004, or send an email to E0171Implementation@health.ny.gov.

Sincerely,

Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner of Health