

# The Facts About Medical Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill



Medical Aid in Dying laws provide the option for terminally ill, mentally capable adults to end their life when and where they choose by requesting a prescription. The laws define a strict, voluntary process with multiple safeguards.



Medical Aid in Dying laws are referred to by the acronym MAID and also known as Death with Dignity laws. In the U.S., these laws always apply only to adults with terminal illnesses.



There are strict eligibility requirements. A patient must be an adult, have six months or less to live, be able to make an informed healthcare decision and be able to take the medication themselves. Two doctors must agree that the patient is mentally capable of making the decision.



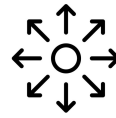
Patients are protected by more than a dozen safeguards. Two doctors must confirm that the patient has six months or less to live — due to a terminal illness, not because of age or disability. Two doctors and two independent witnesses must confirm that no coercion exists.



The laws are administered on a state level. These jurisdictions have passed MAID laws: Oregon, Washington, Vermont, Maine, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Hawai'i, and New Jersey. Medical aid in dying is allowed through a court ruling in Montana.



All of the laws in the U.S. are similar and modeled on the Oregon Death with Dignity Act passed in 1994, the first MAID law in the U.S. The safeguards of these laws have proven effective. Not a single case of abuse or coercion has ever been filed.



Medical Aid In Dying is optional. It is optional for patients and healthcare providers. No person is required to use it and no doctor is mandated to prescribe the medication. All healthcare providers may opt-out of participation.



The patient is in control. Only the patient can request the prescription. The patient must be able to take the medication unaided. They can change their mind at any time and choose not to take it.



It improves end of life care. Evidence shows that palliative or comfort care gets better for patients and families in states with medical aid in dying. The vast majority of patients who have obtained a prescription were also using hospice care.



Medical Aid in Dying can provide comfort and control when a patient is facing the uncertainties and suffering of a terminal illness. Patients report that just having this option relieves fear and anxiety — even for those who never choose it.

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