

## Organ and Tissue Donation Reference Sheet

*Courtesy of Organ Donor Center of Hawaii*

Darryl Ing, Executive Director

info@organdonorhawaii.com

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### General organ and tissue donation and transplantation facts for deceased donation

- Federal law requires that all families of brain dead patients be offered the option of organ and tissue donation, 42CFR482.45
- Everything medically possible is done to save the patient's life **before** the option of donation is presented to families
- Someone who is brain dead will never recover and is legally dead
  - Brain death is defined in Hawaii state law, HRS 327C-1 Determination of death, "...the person has experienced irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem."
  - Brain death is determined by medical tests and examinations performed by two separate physicians who assess brain activity
  - Brain death is NOT the same as a coma, which is a state of unconsciousness
- Transplantable organs include heart, intestine, kidney, liver, lung, and pancreas
- Transplantable tissues include corneas, heart valves, skin, bone, tendons, veins and whole joints
- There is no cost to the donor family for donation
- Donation does not affect the physical appearance of the body and should not interfere with funeral arrangements
- In the U.S., as of March 2006, more than 91,000 people are waiting for organ transplants; 384 people are on Hawaii's waitlist
  - The national waitlist is maintained by United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), for up-to-date statistics, please see [www.unos.org](http://www.unos.org)
  - Priority is given to those patients who are the sickest and have been waiting the longest

### Hawaii-specific information

- In Hawaii, nearly 400 patients are waiting for organs with approximately 90% waiting for kidneys
- Organ Donor Center of Hawaii is the only federally-designated organ procurement organization for the State of Hawaii, [www.organdonorhawaii.com](http://www.organdonorhawaii.com)
- Because of our geographic location, most organs recovered in Hawaii stay in Hawaii to be transplanted
  - If there is no suitable recipient locally, the organs are offered within the region first and then to the rest of the nation
  - Hawaii is included in the Northwest Region for organ allocation, which includes Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana
- St. Francis Medical Center, Liliha, Transplant Institute of the Pacific is the only transplant center for Hawaii, [www.stfrancishawaii.org](http://www.stfrancishawaii.org)

### Appropriate and accurate phrases

Inaccurate: *"The patient was kept on life support until the organs could be removed for donation."*

Fact: Since organ donors are declared dead under Hawaii State law (HRS 327C-1), it is inaccurate to use the words "life support" because it implies that the donor is being kept "alive" for the purpose of donation.

Recommended: **"Heartbeat and respiration were artificially maintained so organs could be recovered" or "on mechanical support to maintain organ function."**

Inaccurate: *"The organs were harvested."*

Fact: Families of organ donors feel that this term is offensive. Organs are not crops or plants, therefore, they are not harvested.

Recommended: **"Organs were surgically recovered" or "organs were recovered for transplant."**

Inaccurate: *"The transplant recipient was at the top of the waiting list."*

Fact: There is no single unified transplant waiting list with all of the patients in a static ranking. When a donated organ becomes available, a list of all potential recipients matching the donor is generated based on donor and recipient characteristics such as blood type, donor / recipient size, etc.

Recommended: **"The recipient waited 6 months before he/she received his/her transplant."**

### **Appropriate and accurate phrases, continued**

- Inaccurate: "Since there was nothing more the doctor could do to help him come out of his coma, the family decided to donate his organs."
- Fact: Coma and brain death are two distinct diagnoses. In coma, although unconscious, a patient has brain function and considered alive under Hawaii State law.
- Recommended: "After being in a coma for two weeks the patient further deteriorated and was pronounced dead. His/Her family chose to donate his organs."

### **Appropriate terminology**

- RECOVER or RECOVERY of organs and tissues instead of "harvest"
- DECEASED DONOR instead of cadaveric donor
- VENTILATED or MECHANICAL SUPPORT instead of life support

### **Helpful websites**

- Organ Donor Center of Hawaii [www.organdonorhawaii.com](http://www.organdonorhawaii.com)
- United Network for Organ Sharing [www.unos.org](http://www.unos.org)
- U.S. HRSA, Division of Transplantation [www.organdonor.gov](http://www.organdonor.gov)
- Coalition on Donation [www.shareyourlife.org](http://www.shareyourlife.org)
- Hawaii Coalition on Donation [www.donatelifehawaii.org](http://www.donatelifehawaii.org)
- Musculoskeletal Transplant Foundation [www.mtf.org](http://www.mtf.org)
- American Association of Tissue Banks [www.aatb.org](http://www.aatb.org)