

First-Person Authorization and Texas Law: Recognizing the Donor’s Legal Donation Directive

Texas state law specifies how organs and tissues are to be donated within Texas hospitals via the Uniform Anatomical Gift (UAGA.) Until recently, the common practice was for organ procurement organizations (OPOs), like LifeGift, to approach families and ask them if they would consider donating a loved one’s organs and/or tissues.

With recent changes to the UAGA, there is no longer a reason for the OPO to seek consent from an individual’s family if the person is registered on the Donate Life – Texas Registry, the official database of Texans who have provided first-person authorization to be organ and tissue donors upon their deaths. Instead, an OPO will notify the family of an individual’s wishes to be an organ, eye or tissue donor and those wishes cannot be revoked. If the person is registered as donor, their “choice is first.”

“While most families are pleased to know their loved one is a registered donor and accept their loved one is a donor and their wishes, a very small number may oppose the donation, creating conflict between the family, LifeGift and potentially the hospital,” said Teresa Shafer, chief operating officer and executive vice president of LifeGift. “It is not only the OPO’s obligation to honor donor designation each and every time – it’s the law.”

LifeGift recently published an “Organ and Tissue Donor Manual” that is available on the www.lifegift.org and explains the UAGA and donor designation in more detail. It can be found under the “Resources for Health Care Professionals.”

For more information, please call the LifeGift Donor Resource Center at 1-800-633-6562 or visit www.donatlifetexas.org.

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