

DONATION AFTER BRAIN DEATH (DBD)

Brain death is the complete, irreversible loss of all brain and brain stem function. Typically, this is due to a severe brain injury or illness, and the patient is hospitalized with life-sustaining support for critical care.

HOSPITALIZATION AND TESTING

A ventilated patient is hospitalized and the care team works to stabilize and treat that patient. Physicians perform required extensive clinical testing for brain function. Organ recovery and transplant teams are not involved in care or testing but, as required by law, Indiana Donor Network is notified by the hospital about patients who are unlikely to recover.

DECLARATION OF BRAIN DEATH

A physician from the hospital who is unaffiliated with the organ donation and transplant teams determines brain death in accordance with hospital policy. Official declaration of brain death means the patient is legally deceased; brain death is not a coma or vegetative state. The ventilator continues to provide oxygenation to help maintain organ function until organ recovery surgery.

FAMILY DISCUSSION AND AUTHORIZATION

Indiana Donor Network staff meet with the family to discuss organ donation and provide compassionate education. If the patient is a registered donor, authorization is already documented and the donation process will proceed if medically suitable. If the patient is not a registered donor, the legally authorized donation decision-maker (as defined by the Indiana Uniform Anatomical Gift Act) may approve or decline donation. Donors may remain at the hospital for organ recovery surgery or be transported to the Indiana Donor Network Organ and Tissue Recovery Center.

MEDICAL EVALUATION AND MATCHING

Indiana Donor Network reviews the potential donor's medical history and coordinates testing to determine which organs are suitable for transplant. Medically suitable organs are matched to patients on the national transplant waiting list in consultation with transplant surgeons. This highly regulated process considers blood type, organ size, proximity and recipient illness severity. This process may extend the donor's time on a ventilator.

ORGAN RECOVERY

The organ donor's family is given time for final goodbyes before organ recovery, a surgical process performed by transplant center surgeons and surgical staff in an operating room. Recovered organs are transported for lifesaving transplants, and Indiana Donor Network coordinates transportation of the donor hero to the family's chosen funeral home.

Indiana Donor Network provides updates about the impact of the decision to donate and maintains relationships with families of donor heroes, offering ongoing grief support options, memory-making opportunities, and invitations to events to honor donor heroes. Indiana Donor Network can also facilitate communication between donor families and recipients, and if both parties agree, can help coordinate direct interaction.

Learn more about family support at [IndianaDonorNetwork.org/donor-families](https://indianadonornetwork.org/donor-families).

ABOUT DECEASED DONATION

Deceased organ donation is a heavily regulated and nuanced process that is only possible in less than 1% of deaths. In all circumstances, organ recipients are matched using the national transplant waiting list and robust grief support is offered to the donor's family.

Learn more about the types of donation at indianadonornetwork.org/about-donation/types-of-donation/.