



Voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia

Information for pharmacists

Summary

This information sheet provides an overview of the role of pharmacists in the voluntary assisted dying process in Western Australia (WA).

Key points include:

- The *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019* (the Act) provides for the roles of Authorised Supplier and Authorised Disposer.
- These roles are authorised by the Director General of the Department of Health as Chief Executive Officer under the Act.
- An Authorised Supplier is a registered health practitioner, or person in class of registered health practitioners, who is authorised to supply the voluntary assisted dying substance. In practice, Authorised Suppliers are pharmacists who are engaged in the Western Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Statewide Pharmacy Service (SWPS).
- An Authorised Disposer is a registered health practitioner, or person in a class of registered health practitioners, who is authorised to dispose of the voluntary assisted dying substance.
- The list of Authorised Disposers (publication 1 July 2021) specifies who is authorised to dispose of the voluntary assisted dying substance (further detail provided).
- Authorised Disposers who receive unused or remaining voluntary assisted dying substance and supportive medications for disposal have legal obligations under the Act.

What is voluntary assisted dying?

Voluntary assisted dying allows an eligible person to legally access medication that will cause their death. This medication is called the voluntary assisted dying substance. The person may choose to self-administer the voluntary assisted dying substance or may have the substance administered to them by an eligible medical practitioner or nurse practitioner (the Administering Practitioner).

Further information on the voluntary assisted dying process is available in the [Overview of the voluntary assisted dying process](#) information sheet.

Which registered health practitioners (pharmacists) can supply the voluntary assisted dying substance?

Only an Authorised Supplier can supply the voluntary assisted dying substance. In WA, Authorised Suppliers are registered health practitioners who are pharmacists that are engaged in the Western Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Statewide Pharmacy Service (SWPS). While SWPS is based at a tertiary hospital in Perth, it is a statewide service and can advise Authorised Disposers across WA.

Further information on SWPS can be found in the [What is the Western Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Statewide Pharmacy Service \(SWPS\)?](#) information sheet.

Which registered health practitioners (pharmacists) can dispose of the voluntary assisted dying substance?

Only an Authorised Disposer can dispose of unused or remaining voluntary assisted dying substance which has been prescribed for self-administration. In WA, Authorised Disposers include registered pharmacists that hold specifically identified roles*, such as (but not limited to):

- Pharmacist with overall responsibility at a registered pharmacy
- Pharmacist-in-Charge or Pharmacist Manager at a registered pharmacy
- Chief Pharmacist, Head/Director of Pharmacy or Coordinator of Pharmacy at a hospital service
- Regional Chief Pharmacist or Senior Regional Pharmacist at a hospital service
- Senior Pharmacist at SWPS.

*Refer to the published list for full details of pharmacist roles authorised as Authorised Disposers.

This means that there are pharmacists across WA who are authorised to receive any unused or remaining voluntary assisted dying substance and dispose of it safely.

A person may also be taking supportive medications at the time the voluntary assisted dying substance is administered. Unused or remaining supportive medications may also be given to an Authorised Disposer for safe disposal.

The Act requires the [list of Authorised Disposers](#) be published by the Department of Health (first publication 1 July 2021).

Why is an Authorised Disposer needed?

Under the Act, a person who has decided to self-administer the voluntary assisted dying substance must appoint a Contact Person. This role is described in the information sheets *Choosing the Contact Person* and *Being the Contact Person*.

One of the responsibilities of the Contact Person is to give any unused or remaining voluntary assisted dying substance to an Authorised Disposer. This might be necessary if the person accessing voluntary assisted dying has:

- died without self-administering the voluntary assisted dying substance; or
- revoked their self-administration decision and already has the voluntary assisted dying substance in their possession; or
- died by self-administration of the voluntary assisted dying substance but some substance is left over.

The unused or remaining voluntary assisted dying substance must be given to an Authorised Disposer as soon as possible (and within 14 days of the day the person died or revoked their decision).

I am an Authorised Disposer under the Act. What services may I need to provide?

As an Authorised Disposer you are authorised to possess any unused or remaining voluntary assisted dying substance given to you by the Contact Person for the purpose of disposing of it. If you need guidance on disposal of the voluntary assisted dying substance you can contact SWPS (details below).

If you dispose of voluntary assisted dying substance you **must notify** the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board that the substance has been disposed by completing and submitting the **Authorised Disposal Form**. This can be done using the Voluntary Assisted Dying – Information Management System (VAD-IMS) which can be accessed via the [Voluntary Assisted Dying Board](#). You do not need to apply for full access for VAD-IMS to complete and submit this form. You may complete the form online or return via fax.

Do I have to be involved as an Authorised Disposer?

No. Even if your role means that you are **authorised** to be an Authorised Disposer under the Act, you are not **obliged** to act as one.

The Contact Person will be encouraged to contact an Authorised Disposer ahead of time to confirm availability. If you are not willing or able to dispose of the voluntary assisted dying substance you may suggest the Contact Person contacts SWPS.

Additional information and support

The pharmacists at SWPS can liaise with Authorised Disposers and should be the first point of contact for queries about disposal of the voluntary assisted dying substance or supportive medications. SWPS can be contacted by email or phone during standard business hours (8:30 am – 5:00 pm).

Email: StatewidePharmacy@health.wa.gov.au

Phone: (08) 6383 3088

In addition, the Western Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Statewide Care Navigator Service (SWCNS) has been specifically established to support anyone involved in voluntary assisted dying in WA. This includes health professionals such as pharmacists. SWCNS can be contacted by email and phone during standard business hours (8:30 am – 5:00 pm).

Email: VADcarenavigator@health.wa.gov.au

Phone: (08) 9431 2755

Glossary of terms

Refer to *Accessing voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia – Glossary of terms* for explanations of key terms used within this information sheet.

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