



## Accessing voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia

# Assistance with communication

### Summary

This information sheet is for people who want to know more about the options for assistance with communication during the voluntary assisted dying process.

### Key points include:

- It is important that a person who intends to access voluntary assisted dying can understand what is happening at each stage of the process and can communicate their needs.
- Under the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019* (the Act), family members or friends are not allowed to act as interpreters for a person accessing voluntary assisted dying.
- An accredited interpreter must hold a credential issued under the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) certification scheme to provide services as part of the voluntary assisted dying process.
- For a person with a disability, where the disability affects their ability to communicate, they can use their preferred means of communication (e.g. a communication aid, writing or gestures).
- The assistance of an interpreter should be arranged by the medical practitioner (doctor) involved. Alternatively, a person intending to access voluntary assisted dying can contact the Statewide VAD Care Navigator Service which will also be able to help.

### Communicating during the voluntary assisted dying process

It is important that a person who intends to access voluntary assisted dying can understand what is happening at each stage of the process and communicate their needs and decisions. Often in medical and health settings another person, such as a family member or friend, will offer to assist with interpretation or translation for a person receiving care. This type of assistance for someone seeking to access voluntary assisted dying is not allowed under the Act.

### Using an interpreter

In Western Australia, any person accessing voluntary assisted dying who uses interpreter services, including Australian sign language (Auslan), must use the services of an interpreter who holds a credential issued under the NAATI certification scheme and is qualified to communicate difficult information accurately. These interpreters are also bound by confidentiality and are not allowed to share the information they receive while working.

If an interpreter is required, this should be arranged by the medical practitioner involved as part of their usual processes (and typically at no cost to the person). The Western Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Statewide Care Navigator Service can also be contacted to assist during standard work hours (8:30 am – 5:00 pm).

Email: [VADcarenavigator@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:VADcarenavigator@health.wa.gov.au)

Phone: (08) 9431 2755

## Using other communication strategies

If the person intending to access voluntary assisted dying has a disability that affects their ability to communicate, they can use their preferred means of communication to communicate with the medical practitioners and other health professionals involved in the process (e.g., a communication aid, writing or gestures).

The person may communicate verbally, by gestures, in writing or by other means of communication during the voluntary assisted dying process.

## When can an interpreter or other communication strategy be used?

A person requesting access to voluntary assisted dying should be supported to use an interpreter or other communication strategy where necessary, at any stage during the process. Further information on the steps involved in accessing voluntary assisted dying can be found in the information sheet *Accessing voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia – Overview of the process*.

Situations for use might include:

- as part of the request and assessment process with the Coordinating Practitioner or Consulting Practitioner.
- when completing the Written Declaration.
- when deciding how the voluntary assisted dying substance should be administered.

Interpreter services can be used during telehealth consultations that occur over the telephone or using a videoconferencing application. However, there are some aspects of the voluntary assisted dying process that cannot be communicated this way (by telephone or internet). If needed, the medical practitioners involved in the process will be able to guide the interpreter about what can and cannot be discussed at each consultation.

## Where can I find more information?

For further information please visit the Department of Health WA website [ww2.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddying](http://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddying)

## 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.

### Acknowledgement

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