



Choice and Dignity, Inc.

End-of-Life Advocacy

P.O. Box 86886, Tucson, AZ 85754

800-811-4112 ~ www.ChoiceAndDignity.org

JULY 2023 Newsletter

In The News

U.S. News:

Vermont's Action Will Help Terminally Ill Adults in Other States Access Peaceful Dying Option

Advocates for improving end-of-life care options for terminally ill adults praised the Vermont Legislature and Gov. Phil Scott (R-Vt.) for becoming the first state to remove the residency requirement from its medical aid-in-dying law.

The signing of the bill, H.190, into law means that people who reside in other states can seek medical aid in dying in Vermont.

Patient Choices Vermont (PCV) is a nonprofit dedicated to educating the public about end-of-life options. PCV has posted guidelines and a checklist for nonresidents, along with guidelines for doctors (<https://www.patientchoices.org/non-residents.html>).

PCV is strongly recommending that patients, medical providers and families ensure that all steps in the medical aid-in-dying process take place physically in Vermont in order for the legal protections of Act 39 to apply. People who want to consider medical aid in dying are encouraged to read the PCV materials and discuss all their options with their families and their existing medical teams before asking for a referral to a Vermont physician.

International News:

Canadian Authorities Arrest Kenneth Law for Distributing Sodium Nitrite

Police have charged Mississauga resident Kenneth Law for the alleged online sales and distribution of sodium nitrite in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), reportedly linked to two deaths in the Peel Region.

The 57-year-old is facing two counts of counselling or aiding suicide.

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In The News — continued

Sodium nitrite is a preservative used for meat processing, but used in large doses, the compound can be lethal.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday night, Peel Regional Police's Deputy Chief Marc Andrews said they are aware that the packages have been sent to 40 different countries. He added 1,200 packages have been shipped in total, but clarified they are unsure if all of those packages contained sodium nitrite.

Local News:

Choice and Dignity Discontinues Compassionate Consultant Services

After a great deal of discussion, the Board reluctantly approved pausing Compassionate Consultant (Exit Guide) services. The conclusion was reached after a thorough review of the requirements for providing the service and our current resources. Requests for guide services will be referred to FEN, MAID providers, and local Death Doula's who work with VSED.

Priority Poll Results

Thanks to all who participated in our Priority Survey. We had an over 10% response rate which we thought was great! Our Deliberate Life Completion Class was the clear priority, followed closely by the new topic of 'Dying with Dementia.' Board members are currently working on developing both in-person and online classes for delivery in the Fall.

Scan the
QR code to
go to our
website





MEET THE BOARD

My name is Myriam Coppens. I'm part of the California contingent of Choice & Dignity. I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, and a retired Nurse Practitioner. In 1989 I opened the Hemlock Society Chapter of Portland, Oregon and volunteered until the chapter closed in 1997, when Medical Aid In Dying (MAID) became legalized. After I retired and moved to California in 2003, I eventually joined Final Exit Network (FEN), and became an Exit Guide. At age 80 I retired from FEN and being a guide. I eventually found my way back into this very important work through Choice and Dignity (C&D) by becoming a member of their Board of Directors.

As things stand in California now, the END OF LIFE OPTION ACT (EOLOA) is available. However, for patients to be able to use this bill, they must be terminally ill, and have just six months to live. It is a great start to relieving suffering, but this bill does not go far enough. Many patients suffer from progressive, irreversible, debilitating illnesses, such as Alzheimer's, MS, ALS, Parkinson's, and some cancers, to name just a few.

I am 82 years old now, a mother, and a grandmother. I still work as a therapist with a local non-profit.



Myriam enjoys good movies, music, her two great grandchildren, daily dog park excursions, putting in the yard, friends, and family. Born in Belgium, she was employed for 25 years at Oregon Health Sciences University, Student Health Service until she retired in 2002.

Choice & Dignity Board

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Steve Miller, MD	Phineas Anderson
Derek Humphry	Richard MacDonald, MD
Elizabeth Smith, Esq.	Colleen Whitaker, MA

Board Meeting Schedule

July - no meeting

August—Sat August 12 4 pm AZ time

September—Sat Sept 9th 4 pm AZ time

Via Zoom—please send a note to

ChoiceAndDignityInc@gmail.com

to request a Zoom link for the meeting



Letter to John Abraham in 2021

I have spoken to you over the phone about my concerns and the obstacles one faces when trying to complete the objective of ending one's life with choice and dignity.

There are many issues one faces after deciding to join Choice And Dignity.

These issues are:

1. Inertia
2. Procrastination
3. Fear
4. Lack of a support system. There is a great need for personal support.
5. Avoidance. People do not like to think about their own personal death.
6. Deficient knowledge of how to use the regulator attached to a nitrogen tank.
7. The need for retraining.
8. We do not often have the "perfect terminal illness." For example, some people, while mentally competent, develop Alzheimers and are no longer competent. Some people have falls and become bed ridden and lack the mobility to complete their objective; others may experience a stroke and become physically debilitated. Blindness may occur in diabetics

In conclusion, all the above contribute to the unsuccessful completion of ones wishes I think it is imperative to expand the support system. State law makes it difficult to support others, yet it does not minimize the need for that support system. There is a great need to define what type of support system works and how we can implement that system by using a personalized support system.

Sincerely Yours,
Stephen Miller

Stephen recently retired from the C&D Board and now sits on our Advisory Board.

Media Review

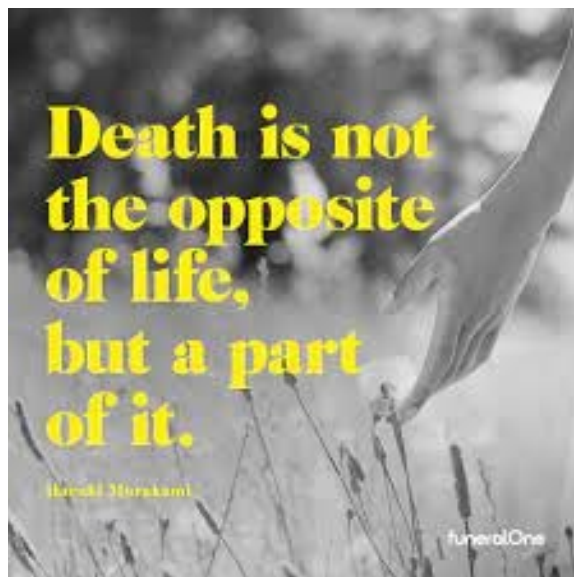
Walking Each Other Home: Cultural Practices at End of Life

The Arizona State Museum and the Southwest Folklife Alliance partnered to produce an exhibit that closed at the end of February. Fortuitously, the group produced a series of three videos that are available in YouTube, discussing death and dying.

At once solo and communal, death, dying, mourning and honoring are part of the circle of life. What makes this universal experience unique are the cultural practices, values, and beliefs that communities and families hold. These include practices, traditions, adages and rituals that address end-of-life planning and preparation, loss, grief and how we memorialize those who have passed on. Looking closely at them can help us understand both ourselves and one another, and bring dignity to an event we will all, at some point, experience.

The three videos discuss: Planning for Death, Cultural Considerations at End of Life, and Caregiving at End of Life.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvpN7OLy7kLu9dYSg4OI8mgji23xVqRRO>



The Role of Death Doulas: Bringing Compassion and Support to End-of-Life Care

In recent years, a growing movement has emerged in the field of end-of-life care — the role of death doulas. Death doulas, also known as end-of-life doulas or death midwives, are individuals who provide emotional, spiritual, and practical support to the dying and their families. They offer a compassionate presence during the transition from life to death, ensuring that the dying person's wishes and needs are respected. In this article, we will explore the role of death doulas and the valuable contributions they make in creating a more holistic approach to end-of-life care.

One of the primary roles of death doulas is to create a safe and supportive environment for the dying person. They offer a non-judgmental and compassionate presence, actively listening to their fears, concerns, and desires. Death doulas strive to understand the dying person's unique needs, beliefs, and values, providing a space for open and honest conversations about death and dying. By fostering a supportive atmosphere, death doulas help alleviate anxiety, promote emotional healing, and ensure the dying person feels seen, heard, and respected.

Emotional and Spiritual Support:

Death is a deeply emotional and spiritual experience, and death doulas recognize the importance of addressing these aspects of the dying process. They offer comfort and companionship, providing a source of emotional support for both the dying person and their loved ones. Death doulas may assist in exploring and discussing end-of-life wishes, facilitating

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meaningful rituals or ceremonies, and helping individuals find solace and meaning in the face of death. By offering a compassionate presence, death doulas help individuals navigate the complex emotions that arise during this time, fostering healing and acceptance.

Navigating Practical Matters:

In addition to emotional and spiritual support, death doulas also assist with practical matters related to end-of-life planning. They can help the dying person and their families navigate the healthcare system, understand medical options, and make informed decisions about treatment. Death doulas may also aid in coordinating support services, such as arranging for home care, hospice services, or counseling. By taking care of logistical details, death doulas alleviate some of the burdens faced by families, allowing them to focus on spending quality time with their loved ones.

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Death doulas provide compassionate support for everyone involved in the dying process.

Continued from **The Role of Death Doulas ...**

Educational Advocacy and Guidance:

Death doulas often play an educational role, empowering individuals, and families with knowledge about the dying process and available resources. They provide information about advance care planning, end-of-life options, and legal matters, ensuring that individuals have the tools to make informed choices. Death doulas can also advocate for the wishes of the dying person, helping them communicate their desires to medical professionals and family members. By promoting open dialogue and education, death doulas contribute to a greater understanding and acceptance of death and dying within society.

Conclusion:

The role of death doulas is invaluable in transforming end-of-life care into a more compassionate and holistic experience. By offering emotional, spiritual, and practical support, death doulas help individuals, and their families navigate the complexities of the dying process. They create safe spaces for open dialogue, provide comfort and companionship, and empower individuals to make informed choices about their end-of-life care. In a society that often shies away from discussions about death, death doulas play a vital role in bringing awareness, understanding, and dignity to the final stages of life. Their presence reminds us that dying is a natural part of the human experience, and that everyone deserves to be treated with compassion, respect, and love as they transition from this world to the next.

Death Doulas do not provide medical services and therefore are not covered by medical insurance. You can find resources regarding death doulas at:

Tucson - <https://tucsonendoflifedoulas.com/doulas>
 California - <https://deathdoulas.com/california-death-doula-directory>

Call for Volunteers

We admit it! Many hands make light work, and we need more volunteers.

Our devoted Choice and Dignity Board of Directors is seeking help with several endeavors. Please call 1-800-811-4112 if you might be willing to help.

- ◆ Discussion Group organizers/leaders. Would you like to help people discuss issues related to death.
- ◆ Do you have grant writing experience? We need someone to write applications for grants.
- ◆ Are you skilled at social media. You could help develop our presence. Help us to post to online sources such as Facebook.
- ◆ Audio-visual support people - to setup/run the laptops, projectors, screens, and microphones at our meetings.
- ◆ Videographers - to capture and edit video.
- ◆ Writers - Are you good at expressing yourself? Can you help to summarize articles for our newsletter and/or website. Could you write scripts for our educational videos?
- ◆ Techies: Help manage our website and Zoom meetings.
- ◆ Host venues: do you have a clubhouse or community center suitable for meetings?

Do you have a skill not listed here? Let us know!



"Yes! That was very loud Sir, but I said I wanted to hear your **HEART!**"



Prepare to Die!

Advanced directives related to dementia are important legal documents that allow individuals to outline their preferences and decisions regarding medical treatment and care in the event they become incapable of making decisions due to the progression of their condition. One such advanced directive is offered by *Compassion and Choices*, a nonprofit organization focused on end-of-life care and options.

Compassion and Choices provides an advanced directive specifically designed for individuals with dementia, known as the *Dementia Provision*. This provision aims to ensure that individuals with dementia receive care in accordance with their wishes and values, even when they are no longer able to communicate or make decisions effectively.

The *Dementia Provision* includes several key elements. Firstly, it allows individuals to designate a healthcare agent, someone they trust to make decisions on their behalf when they are no longer capable. This person is guided by the individual's expressed preferences and values, helping to ensure that decisions align with their wishes.

Additionally, the provision emphasizes the importance of maintaining quality of life. It encourages healthcare providers to focus on comfort, pain management, and social interaction, rather than solely pursuing aggressive medical interventions. This approach aims to prioritize the individual's well-being and dignity throughout the course of the disease.

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The advanced directive also addresses end-of-life decisions, including the option to refuse life-sustaining treatments such as artificial nutrition and hydration. It allows individuals to specify their preferences regarding palliative care, hospice care, and the potential use of medical aid in dying, where legally available.

Compassion and Choices' *Dementia Provision* promotes open communication and encourages individuals to discuss their end-of-life wishes with their loved ones and healthcare providers. By documenting their preferences in advance, individuals can have peace of mind knowing that their decisions will be respected and honored, even in the face of cognitive decline.

It is important to note that advanced directives, including those from *Compassion and Choices*, may vary by jurisdiction. Consulting with an attorney familiar with local laws and regulations can help ensure that the document is legally valid and enforceable.

In conclusion, dementia-related advanced directives, such as the one offered by *Compassion and Choices*, play a crucial role in safeguarding the autonomy and dignity of individuals with dementia. By documenting their preferences and designating a health-care agent, individuals can have a voice in their care, even as their cognitive abilities decline. These directives provide guidance for medical decisions, prioritize quality of life, and foster open communication between patients, their loved ones, and healthcare providers.

The form is available in both English and Spanish from [CompassionAndChoices.org/end-of-life-planning](https://www.CompassionAndChoices.org/end-of-life-planning).