

Public Framework to Promote Organ and Tissue Donation in Canada

Introduction

A Task Force composed of representatives from different levels of government and non-governmental organizations was formed in fall of 2003 by the Canadian Council for Donation and Transplantation (CCDT) to develop a public awareness framework to promote organ and tissue donation in Canada. The framework was designed as a common reference tool to help government and non-governmental stakeholders plan unilateral and multilateral initiatives in a way that would increase consistency and convergence among them.

The public framework builds on previous CCDT initiatives, as well as a review of the literature, environmental scans, discussion papers and public surveys. It utilized an advisory committee and stakeholder consultations in its development.

The purpose of the framework is not to develop a strategy for a national campaign or to impose the creative content of messages or roles of various stakeholders. Rather it provides recommendations which should be considered by all programs providing public awareness and education activities. If applied, the expected outcome is that many more Canadians will adopt the following concrete actions to help improve the “supply” side of the donation equation:

- As a potential donor, confirm one’s decision to donate (intent) by signing a donor card *or* registering intent to donate and by letting family members know of one’s decision to donate.
- As a family member, be prepared to receive a request and respect the decision of the deceased person at the time of the request (consent).

Components

1. Focus

Given that:

- a) Consent levels and the donation rate are the result of many factors;
- b) Not all provinces and territories have established “signing *or* registering” as a priority objective; and
- c) “Letting family members know of one’s decision to donate” is a common message and desired behaviour regardless of province or territory of residence...

...the recommended focus of the framework is to increase the number of consents at time of death by encouraging Canadians to donate and let family members know of their decision to donate (organs and tissue) as part of any public awareness/education and social marketing campaigns.



2. Audience

a) Priority audience

The proposed priority audience for public awareness initiatives over the next three years should be women in the 25-59 age range as key influencers on the undecided segments.

b) Audiences within specific communities

Given medical needs, geographic realities and varying degrees of receptiveness, specific community-based approaches should be considered for ethno-cultural communities and First Nations. In these communities, focusing on the most receptive opinion leaders is also likely to be the most effective approach, since they are in a position to establish a positive norm in their respective communities.

3. Messages

a) Messages to encourage the most receptive members of undecided segments

Messages to encourage the most receptive members of undecided segments should focus on humanitarian appeals [e.g., “Helping others, (saving lives, life enhancement and ability to help many people) through organ and tissue donation”].

A secondary message should include how to sign a donor card or register intent in provinces and territories that consider this outcome a priority.

b) Messages to encourage people to let their family know of their decision to donate

Messages to encourage segments of the population that have already decided to donate to let their family members know of their decision should focus on the following: “Making it easy and providing a source of solace for family members at the time of request” and/or “Don’t leave them not knowing.”

4. Methods

a) Testimonials

Donors’ family members and recipients of all ages and from various ethno-cultural communities should be included in communications activities and materials as spokespersons and to deliver messages that illustrate both the life-saving and life-enhancement benefits of donation.

b) Mix of channels

A range of channels to reach women in the 25-59 age range should be considered and optimized, involving mass media, the Internet, face-to-face communications and events.

c) **Partnerships**

Partnerships should be established with health professionals, social and religious groups, workplaces and community organizations that are best suited to reach women in the 25-59 age range and opinion leaders in selected ethno-cultural communities and First Nations.

d) **National Organ and Tissue Donation Week**

Donation organizations should agree on a common date and common messages to be delivered during future annual Organ and Tissue Donation Weeks.

5. Resources

a) **Documentation of current levels of resources**

Stakeholders currently involved in public awareness and education initiatives about organ and tissue donation should document current levels of human (volunteers and staff) and financial resources in specific public awareness and education activities using a common template.

b) **Costing study**

Based on documentation of current levels of resources and related outcomes, an estimate of the human and financial resources required should be established for consideration by Council members.

6. Evaluation

a) **Tracking study**

An annual national tracking study should be established and sustained to monitor progress on the key indicators among various segments of the Canadian population.

7. Integration and Coordination

a) **Links to initiatives for health professional education**

Public awareness initiatives should be coordinated with initiatives that involve health professionals to ensure consistency and provide leverage.

b) **Links to initiatives aimed at developing the donation system**

Public awareness initiatives should be coordinated with initiatives aimed at developing the donation system, and primarily with initiatives that address barriers to the adoption of desired behaviours, namely signing a donor card or registering intent to donate.

c) Integration of recommendations into respective stakeholders' existing and future activities

All organizations involved in the Canadian donation field (governments, non-governmental and organ procurement organizations) should be encouraged to:

- Refer to and tailor the recommendations in this framework to their current and planned activities; and
- Share this framework with their partners at all levels.

8. National-Level

a) Activities

The following national-level activities to promote the use of this framework should be implemented:

- Opportunities for ongoing sharing and pooled production of materials;
- Adoption of a common approach for national events;
- Costing study based on the documentation of current levels of resources;
- Tracking studies; and
- National media relations.

b) Public Awareness Task Force

A national public awareness task force should coordinate the proposed activities in Recommendation 8a. If a task force is formed, its first undertaking should be to develop a plan to implement the activities and a budget.