



## **COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Regarding Body Donation**

**\*NOTE** that the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM), Willed Body Program is referred to as the WBP.

#### ***What is the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, JABSOM Willed Body Program?***

The WBP allows you to donate your body after death for use in medical science and education. Donated bodies are primarily used in the education of medical and graduate students. Other ways that your donation could be utilized is through research and anatomical training for physicians, physical therapists, emergency medical technicians, and forensic anthropologists to name a few other fields of expertise that train through our program.

#### ***How can I leave my body to medical science?***

Upon request, an Anatomical Gift Donation Form (AGDF) authorizing this selfless gift will be sent to you to be completed and returned. Once the **original signed** Anatomical Gift Donation Form has been received, reviewed and accepted, you will be sent an Acknowledgement letter and a Donor Identification (ID) Card. The Donor ID card should be carried with you at all times.

#### ***Once my AGDF is accepted, does it guarantee that you will accept my body at the time of my death?***

There is NO guarantee that the WBP will accept your donation at the time of your death. The reasons WBP may refuse to accept a donated body include, but are not limited to:

1. Dispute by the legal Next-of-Kin (NOK) to donate
2. Temporary closure of program or pause in accepting body donations
3. Severe trauma to the body - Body damage (e.g., the result of an accident or an autopsy, however, call and inquire with the Director for a final answer, as each situation is unique)
4. Body weight - the Donor weighing over 250 pounds
5. A threat to public health and safety (the Donor had an infectious disease, such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV, Prion diseases, active TB, active or presumed COVID-19)
6. We were not notified within 72 hours after the Donor's death
7. Decomposition of the body because of time or place of death

#### ***If the Anatomical Gift Donation Form (AGDF) was not completed prior to death, can my body still be donated?***

Yes, it may be possible. However, the AGDF must be completed by your legal Next-of-Kin (NOK), and be accompanied by any supporting documentation that shows **intent to donate**, along with authorization that he/she is authorized to sign on your behalf. All documents will be reviewed by the Director who will make the final decision. Your legal NOK should call the WBP immediately at 808-692-1445, as there is a time frame in which the body must be physically received. **Pre-enrollment is highly encouraged.**

#### ***Can I sell my body to medical science?***

No, it is illegal to sell or receive money for a body.

#### ***Are there age restrictions for body donations?***

All donors must be 18 years of age or older. However, there is no upper age limit for donating.



***Who may serve as a witness to my body donation?***

Anyone 21 years of age or older, preferably someone expected to be a survivor, may act as a witness. Two witness signatures are required on the AGDF.

***Should I inform someone of my donation?***

Yes. Please inform your family and close friends of your wishes. Your legal Next-of-Kin/Agent or Power of Attorney should have access to a copy of your completed AGDF. Please keep a copy of the completed form for your records.

***If I donate my body to the WBP, can I still donate my organs for transplantation when I die?***

Yes, it is possible, but for *internal transplantable organs* only. These include cornea, heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, pancreas, brain and spinal cord only. It is not possible to be a body donor if tissues, such as skin, muscle or bone are donated.

For more information concerning organ donations please call: Legacy of Life Hawai'i (808-599-7630) or the Hawai'i Lion's Eye Bank & Makana Foundation (808-536-7416).

***What expenses are involved if I donate my body?***

Donors who die on Oahu: The WBP will cover all fees for transportation of your body to the School of Medicine and cremation.

Donors who die on a Neighbor Island or out-of-state: The costs for mortuary preparation and transportation to Honolulu will be at the expense of your family or estate. Once your body has arrived at the Honolulu Airport, the WBP will cover the transportation fees from the Honolulu Airport to the School of Medicine and cremation.

**\*The WBP does NOT provide Death Certificates.** These must be purchased through the State of Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH), Vital Records Office.

***Are there any reasons for my body donation to be refused?***

1. Dispute by the legal Next-of-Kin (NOK) to donate
2. Temporary closure of program or pause in accepting body donations
3. Severe trauma to the body - Body damage (e.g., the result of an accident or an autopsy, however, call and inquire with the Director for a final answer, as each situation is unique)
4. Body weight - the Donor weighing over 250 pounds
5. A threat to public health and safety (the Donor had an infectious disease, such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV, Prion diseases, active TB, active or presumed COVID-19)
6. We were not notified within 72 hours after the Donor's death
7. Decomposition of the body because of time or place of death

The final decision to accept is at the discretion of the Director.

***What happens if the WBP refuses my body?***

If the WBP declines or refuses the donation of an individual, it is the family/agent's responsibility to make final arrangements. Thus, if you are considering body donation, we suggest that you make alternative arrangements with a funeral director/mortuary in the event that the WBP is not able to accept your body. ***How often does this happen?*** Seldom is the donation declined or refused, provided our program is not on a temporary pause in accepting donations. The majority (over 90%) of our registered Donors are accepted into the Program upon death.



***If I complete paperwork for body donation and I change my mind, can my body donation be canceled?***

Yes. Please send us your request to cancel your donation in writing. If you are canceling because you are moving and would like to join a program near your new home, you may register at the nearest medical school.

***Can my family view my body after death at JABSOM?***

No. Viewing of the Donor's body is not possible at the School of Medicine. It may be possible to arrange a viewing/visitation at a local mortuary, at the families' expense, if arrangements have been made ahead of time and coordinated with the WBP Director.

***How long does the WBP keep my body for study and research?***

Medical education and research time averages between 2-18 months with most cremains being returned within 12 months.

***What happens to my body after study and research are completed?***

Your body will be cremated.

***What if my religion prohibits cremation?***

Your family will have to make arrangements at their expense with a mortuary for a direct burial. Our Director will work with the mortuary chosen to ensure proper transfer of your remains.

***What is the Annual Memorial Service?***

Each year in April, the WBP and medical/graduate students hold a memorial service in which they have the opportunity to honor and thank their silent teachers and their families. This service is for those who have completed their teaching within the calendar year. The primary Next-of-Kin (NOK) per honoree will be notified of the memorial service by February. Therefore, if your family has not received information for a service, it's likely due to the fact that you are still teaching.

***Can my cremains be returned to my family for final disposition?***

Yes. The individual you designate to receive your cremains should be advised of your wishes and should keep us informed of their current address and telephone number. You would specify this request in box 33 of the Anatomical Gift Donation form or in box 16 of the Anatomical Gift Update form. Your family does NOT have to wait until the memorial service to receive your cremains. They will be notified by letter when your cremains are ready for return.

***What other options are available for disposition of my cremains?***

You may choose to have your cremains scattered at sea during a memorial service honoring all donors. Your NOK or responsible person will be sent an invitation to the memorial service, after you have completed your teaching program. You would specify this request in box 33 of the Anatomical Gift Donation form or in box 16 of the Anatomical Gift Update form.

***What is a Permanent Donation?***

By making a permanent body donation to the WBP, you allow the WBP to retain part of your body. On occasion, an organ or body part may be exceptionally useful for teaching or research purposes and it is desirable to preserve and retain it permanently for future education. The remainder of your body will be cremated, with cremains being scattered at sea, or returned based on your request. We highly recommend choosing 'Yes', as it allows our program more flexibility in placing you in the teaching/research program best for you.



***How often do you update Donor information?***

Every three to four years, you will be mailed a blue two-paged Anatomical Gift Update Form to ensure that it is still your wish to donate your body after your death and to make sure that all the information in your record is current. Should you or any of your listed contact person(s) have any change in information before an Anatomical Gift Update Form is sent, please contact our office at 808-692-1445 or by email, [wbdonor@hawaii.edu](mailto:wbdonor@hawaii.edu). Failure to complete and return the form in a timely fashion may result in our inability to accept your donation at the time of your death. At that time you will be placed in an 'inactive' status. There is no guarantee we can accept your donation if your status is 'inactive'.

***What happens if I die outside the State of Hawai'i?***

Should your death occur on the US Mainland, Canada, or Puerto Rico, the nearest medical school *may* (your NOK should notify the medical school of your enrollment at JABSOM and be prepared to complete that institutions donation documents) accept your donation to a Willed Body Program as stated by the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act. You should notify your Next-of-Kin (NOK) or responsible person if you desire this option. *If you are adamant to donate to JABSOM WBP, please contact us as soon as possible for important instructions.* The donated body must be prepared for shipment to Oahu by a mortuary. The family or the estate must cover mortuary and airport transportation costs to Honolulu. As prices may vary, we recommend all our Donors contact their local mortuaries for the current price listings. Mortuaries in the United States are required by law to provide pricing information on request. Once the Donor has arrived at the Honolulu Airport, we will arrange transportation to the School of Medicine.

***Does the WBP accept monetary donations from Donors or their family/friends?***

Yes. The WBP is appreciative of tax-deductible donations. Family and friends of Donors wishing to make a monetary donation in memory of their loved one may make a donation to the Willed Body Program via UH Foundation. Monetary donations are used for the Annual Memorial Service and for improvements in our Anatomy lab. For further information, please call 808-692-1445 or email [wbdonor@hawaii.edu](mailto:wbdonor@hawaii.edu).

***Do you help with an Obituary Notice?***

The WBP can submit a free basic Obituary Notice on your behalf to the Honolulu Star-Advertiser (HSA). A template from the HSA will be provided to you upon request. However, if family would like something more in depth, then they may do so by contacting the Honolulu Star-Advertiser's Legal Ads Department directly at 808-529-4344. We can also verify your death for your loved ones with other newspaper organizations if needed.

***How is a Death Certificate processed?***

Your physician, the WBP, and DOH work together to complete the Death Certificate. It is very important that the information provided on the original Anatomical Gift Donation Form (AGDF) and the Update Form is accurate. Incorrect information will cause a delay in the processing of the certificate. The WBP does **NOT** provide certified copies of your Death Certificates, these must be purchased directly from the DOH. We will notify the Next-of-Kin (NOK), or designated provider when the certificate is complete, and we will share information on how to obtain certified copies of your Death Certificate.



University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, John A. Burns School of Medicine

**Willed Body Program**  
**(808) 692-1445 [wbdonor@hawaii.edu](mailto:wbdonor@hawaii.edu)**

***How long does a Death Certificate take to be issued?***

From the time you arrive at JABSOM, your death certificate may take 4-6 weeks to process. This time may vary based on DOH Vital Records staffing, delays, etc. The WBP will notify your Next-of-Kin (NOK) as soon as we are notified it's ready to order.

**Do you still have questions?**

We are happy to help you. Please give us a call at 808-692-1445 between the hours of 8:00am and 4:30pm, HST, Monday through Friday. If you call outside of our department hours, on weekends, or State Holidays, we will return your call as soon as possible.

**Thank you!**  
**The Willed Body Program Staff**