



# Discussion Guide

## Donation begins with a conversation.

Facilitating a discussion can help students process and understand any misconceptions they may have about the organ, eye and tissue donation process. Speaking to them like adults also supports them in taking pride and ownership in their decision to register.

Discussion can be done together as a class or you can divide students into smaller groups of 2 or more to self-guide and ensure learning and participation.



### Conversation Starters

Use the following questions and prompts to spark conversation and guide the discussion.

- What do you know about organ, eye and tissue donation?
- What is the first question that comes to mind when you hear organ, eye and tissue donation?
- What do you think are the biggest reservations people have about registering as a donor?
- Do you know anyone who has donated or received a life-saving transplant?
- Do you think donation is a good thing to do?
- Where can you register as a donor?



### Q & A Session

Following the conversation starters listed above, you can expand the discussion into a more specific Q & A session with your class. Ask your students the following frequently asked questions, and after they share their responses, provide them with the correct answers.

If the class is working in small groups, select a group leader to ask the questions and provide the answers.

#### ■ Which parts of the body can be donated?

##### **Organs:**

- Kidneys (2)
- Liver
- Lungs (2)
- Heart
- Pancreas
- Intestines

##### **Tissues:**

- Bone Tissue
- Heart Valves
- Blood Vessels
- Skin Tissue
- Connective Tissue

##### **Eyes:**

- Cornea
- Sclera

■ **How many people are waiting for a transplant in the U.S.?**

Nationwide, there are over 100,000 people waiting for a life-saving transplant; more than 3,000 of those people are right here in Minnesota.

■ **Who can register to donate?**

Every individual has the right to sign up to donate their organs, eyes and tissues at the time of their death. Your health, religion, race and age will not disqualify you. In fact, the oldest organ donor was 92 and the oldest eye donor in Minnesota was 107!

■ **If you have a health condition, can you register as a donor?**

All medical conditions are considered at the time of death, but most health conditions do not prevent donation. Medical advances now allow people with chronic conditions, cancer, HIV and hepatitis to donate safely. Many times people rule themselves out because of health conditions even though they can still donate and help others. The process behind donation involves many steps to ensure only people who absolutely qualify can be considered for donation. Checking the box does not guarantee that you will become a donor upon death. In fact, only 1% of people who die become donors.

■ **What does joining the Donor Registry mean?**

When you register as an organ, eye and tissue donor, you are making a legal decision\* that will be honored after your death. It's important to talk with your family so they can be aware and prepared to honor your decision.

\* Legal decision for individuals 18 and up

■ **What does my religion say about donation?**

Your religious and spiritual beliefs will be respected, and your decision will be honored. In general, all major religions in the United States support organ, eye and tissue donation and consider it a generous act of caring.

■ **What does donation cost?**

There is no cost to your family or loved ones. If you decide to be an organ, eye and tissue donor, the medical expenses associated with the donation will be covered.

■ **How does the waiting list work?**

When it comes to waiting for a transplant, we are all created equal. Wealthy or famous individuals cannot and do not get bumped up higher on the national transplant waiting list.

***These factors are used to determine the best candidate for an available organ:***

- Blood type
- Body size
- Severity of patient's medical condition
- The patient's waiting time
- Distance between the donor's hospital and the patient's hospital
- Whether the patient is healthy enough for surgery

■ **How many people can a single donor help heal and save?**

One person can potentially save and heal more than 75 lives through organ, eye and tissue donation. In some cases, tissue donation can increase this number significantly.

■ **What if my family doesn't agree?**

Donor designation is a legal and binding decision for ages 18 and over. Legal guardians and parents of minors have the right to refuse donation even if a person under the age of 18 is a registered donor.

■ **What if I don't document my decision?**

If you don't decide prior to your death whether or not you want to become an organ, eye and tissue donor, your loved ones will have the opportunity to make that decision on your behalf. Therefore, it is incredibly important to document your decision and share your decision with your loved ones.

■ **What if my family wants an open casket?**

Organ, eye and tissue donors are heroes and are treated as such. The medical professionals who perform the recovery surgeries treat donors with the utmost respect, just like they would for any other patient. If you and your family were planning on an open casket funeral or viewing, these plans should not be affected by donation.

■ **Is saving my life a priority even if I'm a registered donor?**

Yes. If you are taken to the hospital after an accident or injury, it is the hospital's number one priority to save YOUR life. Your status as a donor is not considered until every effort has been made to try to save your life. To be considered for donation, a patient must be on a ventilator and either declared brain dead or suffer cardiac death.

■ **How do I register as a donor?**

You can register as a donor online at [DonateLifeMidwest.org](http://DonateLifeMidwest.org), by mail, at the DMV when you get your permit or driver's license, or even through the iPhone Health app.



**Share Your Thoughts**

To wrap up the discussion, pose the following questions for your students to share what they learned:

- What surprised you the most about what we just learned?
- Is there any information that you still would like to receive in order to make a more informed decision?



**Need more information or want to host a speaker?**

If you have any questions, need any more information to guide an engaging discussion, or would like to request a speaker for your class, please feel free to contact us.

**LifeSource**

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