

# The *Gift* of Knowledge

Guide for Making Anatomical Gifts to the University of Kentucky

## Frequently Asked Questions

MORTUI VIVOS DOCUERUNT

*“Dead they have taught the living.”*

*Are there costs associated with body donation?*

The Willed Body Program does not charge a fee for its services if accepted into the program. However, the donor's family or legal representative may be responsible for certain costs including:

- Transportation charges from the place of death if located outside of Fayette County. Transportation arrangements can be made with the local funeral home or with the Willed Body Program's contracted mortuary service, Kentucky Mortuary Services, (859) 278-8501. The family should contact Kentucky Mortuary Services either way as soon as possible to coordinate transportation as this is where the body will go immediately after death.
- Costs of making alternate arrangements for final disposition if the donation cannot be completed for any reason.
- Grave markers are not included with University burials. Any grave marker or headstone placement will be the responsibility of the family and coordinated with Lexington Cemetery.

*Will the donor or donor's family be paid a fee for a body donation?*

No. The state anatomical law requires that the donation be a gift without compensation.

*Will the Willed Body Program accept a partial body donation?*

No. The University of Kentucky Willed Body Program is a whole-body donation program. We cannot accept individual body parts.

*Are there age restrictions that prevent me from a body donation?*

Yes. The Willed Body Program only accepts donors 18 years of age or older. There is no upper age limit to donate.

*Is it possible for an ambulance service or even the donor's family to deliver the donor's body to the Medical School?*

No. A licensed funeral director must arrange for delivery of the donor's body to ensure protection of public health and compliance with all related laws and policies. All donors must be delivered to our contracted mortuary service, Kentucky Mortuary Services prior to being delivered to the University.

*Is my body able to be donated after my death if I did not register prior to my death?*

Yes. If a person passes without donating their body, someone with authority under the law may donate the decedent to the University of Kentucky Willed Body Program by completing the proper donation forms. The legal representative, or closest next of kin must contact the Willed Body Program directly as soon as possible to notify us of the intent to donate and to receive the proper forms needed to expedite the donation. These forms may be different than the forms needed prior to death where the donor is the person actually donating their body.

*Will the Willed Body Program accept a body if the donor dies out of state?*

Because of transportation costs and other factors, we recommend that a donor's body be donated to a recipient in the state where death occurs. If the donor is already registered within the program and dies out of state, immediately contact Kentucky Mortuary Services to determine if the donation is still possible. This would be on a case-by-case basis based on many factors and is not a guaranteed acceptance.

*Are there circumstances when a donation could not be used?*

Yes. There are certain conditions that would disqualify the acceptance of a donation.

- Infectious diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis, hepatitis, MRSA, VRE, flesh-eating disease, West Nile virus, and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease

- Other contagious diseases based on the opinion of the Willed Body Program physician consultant
- Obesity (greater than 225 Pounds) or extreme emaciation (a BMI greater than 30 or less than 16 are limiting factors)
- Suffered a violent death, victim of suicide, or homicide
- An autopsy has occurred
- Amputations, open wounds, or incisions
- Any stage IV decubitus (bed sores)
- Presence of gangrene
- Vital organs removed for transplantation purposes (other than corneas)
- Recent treatment with therapeutic radionuclides
- Constraint in any non-prone position
- Any conditions that would impede proper embalming
- Any other restrictions as outlined in the Willed Body Program Physical Assessment form

*If I have had surgery in the past, can I still donate my body to the University of Kentucky?*

Yes. Major and/or minor surgeries are acceptable if the surgery has had time to heal.

*What is the procedure if a donation cannot be used?*

If an anatomical donation is not accepted for any reason, the donor's legal representative is responsible for making alternate arrangements at the expense of the donor's estate. It is recommended to have an alternate arrangement in place in case the donation is unable to be accepted.

*May an institution other than the University of Kentucky use a donor's body?*

Possibly. The Willed Body Program may, in its sole discretion, allow a donor's body to be utilized by another institution or entity as permitted by law for education or research. In these cases, the donor's body will then be returned to the program for final disposition after the educational or research use is complete.

*Will an autopsy be performed, or will my family receive a report of any findings?*

No. The Program does not conduct autopsies.

*Is it likely that the donor's body will be used in research studying a disease the donor had?*

Not necessarily. Any use for research is determined by the Program based on researcher requests pending at the time of the donor's death.

*Can my family have visitation and a funeral service with my body present at the funeral home?*

No, unfortunately, this cannot be arranged.

*How long does the University of Kentucky keep my body for study and research?*

Studies may last several months up to several years. It is not possible to predict what study or research the donor's body will be involved in and the amount of time for each study.

*Are donors cremated after the donation process?*

Yes. It is the strict policy to cremate all donors after their time in study has been completed.

*What happens to my ashes after the study is completed and my body is cremated?*

The Willed Body Program will follow the instructions of the donor or family as indicated in the donation package.

There is no cost to the family for the final disposition if it is handled by the program. The following options are available for the final disposition of the ashes:

- Bury the ashes in the University of Kentucky Memorial Burial Grounds located in The Lexington Cemetery, 833 West Main Street, Lexington, KY. The Willed Body Program assumes the responsibility for burial of the donor's ashes in the University of Kentucky Memorial Burial Grounds. Family members will be notified when the ashes have been interred. If a donor wishes to be buried in a different location, the family would be responsible for making those arrangements and any costs involved.
- Send the donor's ashes to a designated person, or place, within the United States. These arrangements may be changed by the next of kin only. It is essential for the next of kin to maintain current contact information with the Willed Body Program.
- Pick up the ashes directly from Kentucky Mortuary Services. This option is often used if the family wishes to intern the ashes elsewhere such as family grounds at another cemetery or mausoleum.

*Is it necessary to employ a funeral home if I donate my body to the University of Kentucky?*

No. The Willed Body Program contracts a local mortuary service that has a licensed funeral director and embalmer that will take care transportation from the place of death to the University, filing the death certificate, notification of death to vital statistics, etc. However, it is the family's obligation to coordinate transportation of their loved one from the place of death to the Kentucky Mortuary Services if the death occurs outside of Fayette County. The family should contact Kentucky Mortuary Services first to coordinate the transportation and to see if there is a transportation charge. If the family directs any services to be rendered by a local funeral home, the University of Kentucky will not assume the cost of these services.

*Is it necessary to include a body donation in the donor's will?*

No. The intent to donate may be included in a will, but it is not required. Because a will may not be found in time for delivery of the body to the University, it is more effective to have donation instructions readily available on a wallet donation card or donation form. A copy of the signed donation forms, as well as the donor wallet card, should be kept on file with the donor. The donor should also advise his or her family and legal representative of the intent to make a body donation to the University of Kentucky Willed Body Program.

*What is the procedure at the time of death?*

The legal representative, next of kin, or funeral director should call Kentucky Mortuary Services at (859) 278-8501 promptly for instructions so that a determination of acceptability and other arrangements can be made as soon as possible.

*Is there a memorial service for the donors?*

Yes. The University of Kentucky College of Medicine conducts an annual memorial service commemorating all the donors. The closest next of kin will receive an invitation to the Memorial Service.

*Can individual markers be purchased at the University of Kentucky Memorial Burial Grounds?*

Yes. The donor or donor's legal representative may make arrangements directly with Lexington Cemetery. All costs are the responsibility of the donor or the donor's estate.