

District of Columbia (2017-)

Assisted suicide became lawful in the District of Columbia effective from 6 June 2017.

[The law](#) is modelled on Oregon's including referral, at the discretion of the attending physician or consulting physician, to a psychiatrist or psychologist for assessment of whether or not the "the patient is suffering from a psychiatric or psychological disorder or depression causing impaired judgment".¹

DC Health has created [online modules](#) for patients and physicians which each of these participants must sign off as having been viewed. The modules are in power point format and basically set out the [requirements](#) of the Act.²

Minimal reporting

The five annual reports to [date](#) report a total of 20 prescriptions for a lethal substance with 15 deaths resulting from ingestion of the lethal substance – 6 of these deaths occurred between 19 February 2020 and 18 February 2021.

Lethal prescriptions

The [Pharmacist Education Module](#), which it is not mandatory for a pharmacist to view before dispensing the lethal substance, recommends that "Pharmacists should educate themselves to recognize prescriptions that apply to Death with Dignity and pre-medications. Medications should be taken on empty stomach to help with absorption. Medications must be ingested swiftly (i.e., less than ninety (90) seconds). Examples of possible medications include, but are not limited to, the following: – Secobarbital capsules with the contents removed and collected in a glass, then mixed with four (4) oz. of room temperature water or juice (note: do not use grapefruit juice); – Protocol of diazepam, digitalis, morphine sulfate and propranolol (aka DDMP)".

A pharmacist may dispense the lethal substance to any agent nominated either orally (presumably by phone) or in writing by the person who is intended to use it.³

The official form for patients allows for the optional appointment of a person to be responsible for discarding any unused lethal substance. The [DC Health website](#) suggests disposing of such substances mixed with coffee grounds or cat litter in, say, an empty margarine tub in the regular trash.⁴

¹ <https://code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/code/titles/7/chapters/6B/>

² <https://dchealth.dc.gov/page/death-dignity-act-2016>

³

https://dchealth.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/doh/page_content/attachments/Death%20with%20Dignity%20-%20Education%20Modules.Pharmacist.DC%20HEALTH%20Version.06.18.18.pdf

⁴ <https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/safe-disposal-medications>

Partnership with Compassion & Choices

A Death with Dignity and Best Practices for the Medical Community seminar jointly sponsored with Compassion and Choices and DC Health was held for health care professionals on August 10, 2018.⁵

Suicide promotion

In October 2018 –during Suicide Prevention Month!! – [a public service announcement](#) promoting assisted suicide was run in the District of Columbia by advocates concerned at the lack of residents using the deadly law.⁶

Conclusion

The promotion of assisted suicide during Suicide Prevention Month is a new low in the crassness of the assisted suicide experimenters desperate to find guinea pigs for their experiment in the American capital.

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https://dchealth.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/doh/page_content/attachments/DWD%20Report%202018%20Final%20%20%208-2-2019.pdf

⁶ <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/oct/10/the-deadly-advocacy-of-doctor-assisted-suicide/>