



MINISTERIAL DIRECTIVE

Medical Assistance in Dying Guidelines for the Northwest Territories

MD 2025-03

1. Directive

This Ministerial Directive requires that all Health and Social Services Authorities follow the *Medical Assistance in Dying Guidelines for the Northwest Territories (Guidelines)* for the provision of medical assistance in dying in the Northwest Territories (NWT).

2. Background

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in February 2015 that it is against the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to prosecute a doctor for assisting someone with incurable suffering who wants to end their life. Amendments to the *Criminal Code*, setting out the medical assistance in dying (MAID) regime in Canada, came into effect in June 2016, and further changes came into force in March 2021, allowing those with a “grievous and irremediable medical condition” but whose death is not near to access MAID.

The *Guidelines* were initially intended as an interim measure until a legislative framework for the NWT was developed; however, the *Guidelines* have since evolved to provide a comprehensive framework for medical assistance in dying in the NWT, encompassing all federally legislated requirements as well as NWT-specific rules and guidance for provision of the service.

This Directive rescinds Ministerial Directive 2016-01 – Medical Assistance in Dying Interim Guidelines for the NWT, signed on June 5, 2016.

3. Purpose

Health and social services professionals rely on the *Guidelines* to provide MAID in the NWT in accordance with the *Criminal Code*.

Consistent application of the provision of MAID is essential to ensure patients and health and social services professionals are protected.

The *Guidelines* and incorporated documents may be amended from time to time under the authority of the Deputy Minister.



4. Definitions

Health and Social Services Authorities means the Territorial Health and Social Services Authority established under section 5(1) or a Board of Management established under section 10(1) or referred to in subsection 10.2 or 10.3 of the *Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act*, or an organization, agency or firm contracted by the Minister pursuant to section 17 of the *Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act*.

Medical Assistance in Dying means:

- a. the administering by a practitioner of medication(s) to a patient, at their request, that causes their death; or
- b. the prescribing or providing by a practitioner of medication(s) to a patient, at their request, so that they may self-administer the substance and in doing so cause their own death.

5. Exceptions

No exceptions.

6. Amendment

The Minister may amend this Directive from time to time.

7. Effective Date

This Directive comes into effect on June 2, 2025.

8. Expiration Date

This Directive is in effect, as amended from time to time, until it is repealed by the Minister.

9. Review of Directive

This Directive will be reviewed by the Department of Health and Social Services every 5 years.

<original signed by>

Lesa Semmler

Minister of Health and Social Services

May 14, 2025

Date