

MAID witnesses and role of Hospital Social Work

Good morning, today we held a brief teleconference to talk about the role of Hospital Social Work during Covid 19 and the MAID processes.

In light of the current pandemic, and our current state of emergency, Dying with Dignity (a non-profit national organization who has provided us with volunteers, trained to complete the form) is halting their volunteer program. And, as you are aware, hospitals are no longer allowing visitors to hospital. This puts those patients who are interested in MAID, and require two witnesses to complete their request form for MAID in a rather impossible position.

Our Social Work site discipline leads and unit social workers will serve as witnesses for the MAID request form. We received a legal opinion and there is no legal reason that Social Work cannot do so. I have consulted with the College and they agree as well that it does not contravene our standard of practice.

We would need to follow the patient identifier process as per Policy <http://home.wrha.mb.ca/emergency/files/WRHAClientIdentificationPolicy.pdf> .

It is important to note that what the witness is affirming is that the patient is who he/she says they are when the patient signs the form. That is all it is – it assures us that it was the patient who signed the form, and no one else. It is not an endorsement of MAiD nor is it in any way tied to the patient's approval for MAID (it is essential the patient sign a request form in order to be approved, but it is the TEAM's assessment that decides if the patient meets eligibility criteria). The signing of the form takes no more than 5 or so minutes.

If a proxy is required (a person can't sign on their own, due to an inability to use their hands/arms for instance) it would need to be three people – two witnesses and a proxy. This happens only rarely, and I can explain this further if needed. Of course, those social workers who have a conscience based objection to MAID would not be expected to serve as witnesses.

Any questions can be directed to myself or

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