



Sign-Ups Lag Support for Donor Registry

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A recent poll shows that 87 percent of Illinois adults say registering to be an organ donor is the right thing to do.

Yet 40 percent say they have not registered.

"The poll reinforced what we've observed for years in educating the public about donation, that most people procrastinate in documenting a decision," said David Bosch, president of Donate Life America and communications director for the Gift of Hope Organ and Tissue Donor Network.

Bosch says the poll points to the need for a Donate Life Illinois campaign.

The 18-month initiative will educate the public about the state's donor registry, established a year ago and managed by the office of Secretary of State Jesse White.

The registry is a confidential, computerized database that documents a person's consent to be an organ and tissue donor. The registration process, which takes about 20 seconds, makes a person's decision legally binding. It's no longer necessary to sign the back of a driver's license or for medical professionals to get family consent.

Nearly 1.5 million people have joined the registry. The Donate Life Illinois campaign, part of a national campaign through Donate Life America, aims to add 3.5 million people to the registry.

Bosch says the recent statewide poll, conducted by Fako & Associates on behalf of Gift of Hope, shows that nearly half of Illinois adults are unaware of the donor registry. Nearly two-thirds are unaware of the need for people who registered under the state's old "donor intent" registry to reregister in the new one.

The poll "suggests that a lot of people are willing to donate life provided we can tell them about the new registry, explain it takes just 20 seconds to register and make it easy to register now. You don't have to wait until the next time you go to the DMV," Bosch said.

The Donate Life Illinois campaign will train volunteers in February and March on how to coordinate donor registration stations within their communities in time for National Donate Life Month in April.

In addition, major employers throughout the state will be approached in the next three months

to take part by providing information to employees and hosting virtual or on-site donor drives.

The need for more people to join the registry is clear. Nearly 4,700 patients in Illinois are on a waiting list for transplants. Between 200 and 300 Illinoisans die each year on the waiting lists.

Gift of Hope estimates that the new registry, once filled, could lead to a 10 percent increase in organ donors, or about 100 more donor organs available for transplantation each year.

An organ donor provides lifesaving cures and can save up to 25 lives.

Virtually anyone 18 and older can register to become a donor. Medical eligibility is determined at the time of an individual's death.

To register, go online to www.IAmAreYou.org, call (800) 210-2106 or visit any driver's license facility.

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