

# Importance of organ donation highlighted

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According to the Center for Organ Recovery and Education (CORE), 18 people die every day while on the waiting list for an organ transplant.

April is National Donate Life Month, making it a good time to learn the benefits of being an organ donor.

"It's actually a health care crisis," said Misty Enos, director of professional services and community outreach for CORE. "One hundred and twenty-two thousand people nationally are waiting for an organ transplant."

To add perspective, Enos noted, "Last year, we only transplanted 28,000 organs." Statistically, over 8,500 state residents currently await organ transplants.

"I think what people don't realize is it's very difficult to be an organ donor," she said. "If you pass away outside a hospital,

you cannot be an organ donor; if you die outside the hospital, you can (only) be a tissue, skin and cornea donor."

Enos said there are "unique circumstances" that allow people to become organ donors, including dying in a hospital critical care unit, and some-



those circumstances are hard to come by, creating the overwhelming need for transplants.

"We have to make sure every single eligible, potential donor is registered," Enos said.

Aiding CORE in spreading the message is PennDOT, which encourages driver license and identification holders to register to be an organ donor. The push is working, as, according to PennDOT, nearly 46 percent of driver's license and identification card holders, more than 45 million

Pennsylvanians, are registered.

"Potential donors can take action today to add the organ donor designation to their license or identification card, rather than waiting for renewal time," said PennDOT Secretary Barry J. Schoch. "The 90 seconds you spend online requesting the designation for your license or identification card could potentially save a life."

As Schoch pointed out and Enos confirmed, it's unnecessary to wait until

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renewal time to add the designation.

"You can go at anytime to PennDOT's website or CORE.org," she said. "It doesn't show up on your license until you get a new card printed, but you are registered."

At [www.dmv.state.pa.us](http://www.dmv.state.pa.us), state driver's license and identification holders can choose the "Donate Life Pennsylvania" icon at the bottom of the page. Once the designation is added, individuals will receive a designation card that they will have to carry with them to affirm organ donor status until they renew or replace their driver's license or identification card. There is no charge for adding the designation to your driver's license or identification card.

Driver's license and identification card holders, as well as registered vehicle owners, can also support organ donation programs by donating \$1 to the Robert P. Casey Memorial Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Trust Fund at the time of application, renewal or replacement. Proceeds from the fund are used to educate and promote awareness of the organ donor program through nonprofit organizations like

CORE and the Gift of Life Donor Program. Pennsylvanians have donated more than \$11.5 million to the fund to date.

Enos said the designation on a driver's license and identification card as a donor is incredibly important.

"In Pennsylvania, when you register as an organ donor, it is legally first person authorization," she said. "It is almost like a living will; if you put (the designation) on there, your wish will be honored and your family cannot override that decision."

Enos said, in a worst case scenario, if the designation as an organ donor is not present, "your family has to make that decision for you."

"I've been in this business seven years and when people are in that state where they are dealing with a tragedy, the don't know what decision to make if they don't know what their loved one wanted to do," she said. "It's important to make that decision for yourself."

More information on organ and tissue donation in Pennsylvania can be found at [www.donate-life-pa.org](http://www.donate-life-pa.org) and for more information on CORE, visit [www.core.org](http://www.core.org).

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