

## Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD)

**The unit I manage has been identified as a location where clients will be admitted for medical assistance in dying (MAiD). Some of the RNs have expressed the ethical conflict they experience in relation to caring for a client who is choosing to end their life. What am I responsible for? What are RNs responsible for?**

- MAiD is an emotion-filled topic that has an impact on many RNs. Discussing the topic with your staff in an open and respectful manner ahead of an actual planned instance of MAiD will assist your staff to express ethical conflicts and come to a resolution for how to address requests when they are made.
- Organizational policies created by direct care providers and other health care professionals should be in place to clearly articulate the role of the RN when being involved with MAiD.
- RNs have the right to conscientiously object to being involved with MAiD. Steps to declaring a conflict can be found in the *CNA Code of Ethics* (1). Ideally, the declaration should be made proactively and well ahead of an actual situation in order to facilitate ethically safe care for the client.
- Ethically, RNs are accountable for ensuring a client's care needs are met and that the RN does not abandon those in need of nursing care. This means the RN is responsible for caring for the client until other care arrangements can be made (2).
- There is no law or professional standard that requires an RN to be involved in the process of MAiD (3).
- RNs identify the effect of their own values, beliefs and experiences in relationships with clients, recognizing and addressing potential conflicts and using an ethical and reasoned decision-making process to address situations of ethical distress and dilemmas (4).
- RNs are responsible for promoting and protecting a client's right to autonomy, respect, privacy, dignity and access to information (5).
- RNs incorporate knowledge about ethical, legal and regulatory implications of MAiD when providing nursing care (6).

### **What is the role of the RN who receives a request for MAiD?**

The RN's role is:

- To listen to the client's request;
- To explore the reasons for the request within the context of a conversation that includes other end-of-life care options, such as palliative care;
- To appropriately refer the person to a medical or nurse practitioner (NP) to obtain the necessary information about MAiD; and,
- To document that the conversation was initiated by the client (7).

**If an RN refers a client to a medical practitioner or NP with the intent of arranging for MAiD, is the RN a collaborator in homicide or suicide?**

**No.** Bill C-14 provides exemptions to the Criminal Code for persons aiding in MAiD. This means an RN will not be held criminally responsible for assisting with MAiD. This protects the RNs who are at the bedside actively assisting in the procedure and those who assist a client in accessing information (7 and 8).

**Can an NP administer MAiD?**

**Yes.** NPs have been named in Bill C-14 as practitioners who are able to administer MAiD. NPs are required to follow provincial protocols, meet SRNA standards of practice and ensure they have the competence to administer MAiD (9).

**SRNA Resources**

- [Code of Ethics for registered nurses \(2017\)](#)
- [Registered Nurse Practice Standards \(2019\)](#)
- [Registered Nurse Entry-Level Competencies \(2019\)](#)
- [Guideline for NP Involvement in Medical Assistance in Dying \(2016\)](#)
- [Guideline for RN Involvement in Medical Assistance in Dying \(2016\)](#)

**External Resources**

- [Bill C-14](#)
- [Criminal Code](#)

<b>Resource Key</b>		
<b>Number</b>	<b>Resource</b>	<b>Reference</b>
1	CNA Code of Ethics (2017)	D12, page 13 and Appendix B pages 35-37
2	CNA Code of Ethics (2017)	G7, page 17
3	Guideline for RN Involvement in Medical Assistance in Dying (2016)	page 2
4	Registered Nurse Practice Standards (2019)	Indicators 27 and 32, page 5
5	Registered Nurse Practice Standards (2019)	Indicator 33, p. 5
6	Registered Nurse Entry-Level Competencies (2019)	Competency 1.15, page 5

*RN is used to represent all SRNA members including NPs and RN(AAP)s.*

7	Guideline for RN Involvement in Medical Assistance in Dying, 2016	page 4
8	Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other Acts (medical assistance in dying)	
9	Criminal Code	