

POTENTIAL ORGAN DONORS

~2,800,000
US DEATHS

715,000
Deaths in hospital

150,000
Ventilated deaths followed
by OPOs for donation

15,000–17,000
(Donors must be ventilated deaths)
Positive medical evaluation

10,721
ORGAN
DONORS
2018

While there are nearly 3 million deaths in the United States each year, the pool of potential organ donors is actually very small — a little more than 1/2 of a percent of total deaths.

To be medically eligible for donation, an organ donor must:

- Die from an insult or injury to the brain, and be on a ventilator to maintain heart function and blood flow to organs.

When a donor is identified, the OPO is called and:

- Determines if the potential donor is on their state registry or if family members should be approached about possible donation.
- OPOs work with families to ensure that those donors who desire to give the gift of life are honored.
- When there is authorization for donation, the OPO conducts a thorough medical evaluation to identify any other issues that might impact organ donation (e.g., cancer, infectious disease).

Once a donor is successfully qualified for organ recovery:

- The OPO follows the national “list” database for those matching patients, and contacts the respective transplant centers in sequence.
- It is up to the transplant center to decide whether to take an organ. Sometimes they decide it’s not the right match for a variety of reasons. In that case, the OPO follows the national protocol working with transplant centers to identify the next recipient.
- For every successful match, the OPO facilitates authorization, testing, the recovery of the donor organs, and delivery to the transplant center.

The most significant factors limiting donation are medical eligibility and authorization. However, systemic issues also come into play, including preferences of transplant surgeons, regulatory and reimbursement issues, donor hospital support and access to electronic health records. Despite these factors, organ procurement organizations (OPOs) are working every day to maximize donations and to bring lifesaving organs to those waiting.

ORGANS RECOVERED

37,850
RECOVERED ORGANS

Search for a donor match
Acceptance by transplant center
Recover and delivery to transplant center

32,857
ORGANS
TRANSPLANTED
2018

Despite limitations within the current system, OPO efforts have contributed to a steady increase in the identification of organ DONORS and organs TRANSPLANTED since 2012.

32%
Increase in organ
DONORS

33%
Increase in organs
TRANSPLANTED

FROM LOSS TO HOPE

HOW THE ORGAN DONATION PROCESS WORKS