



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
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## Organ and Tissue Donors

Guide for Curriculum Unit 01.01.06  
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There have been concerns in the realm of religion as to whether or not to become an organ or tissue donor. The good news is that practically all religions condone organ and tissue donations or they leave it up to conscience to decide. Becoming a donor is a noble endeavor and the possibility of possibly saving a life shows concern for the life of your fellow man. Anyone can become a donor if they meet the specific qualifications.

It was brought to my attention that the low percentage of donors is due to the lack of public education regarding the benefits of becoming an organ and or tissue donor. There are currently over fifty thousand men, women, and children waiting for an organ donation. Unfortunately many of them will die because there aren't enough organs to go around. Livers are in the shortest supply of all the organs. If there were an increase in organ donations among minorities it would benefit the minorities in organ transplants. The reason for this is genetics. There is a greater success rate among donors and recipients of the same ethnic background. These ethnic groups include African Americans, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics.

The best way to promote organ donations is to talk about it. There are some organs that can only be donated after death, while others can be donated while alive. There is a list of organs and tissues that can be donated, such as heart, kidney, pancreas, eyes, lungs, liver, intestines, veins, skin, bone, bone marrow, heart valves, and fascia. If an individual is not of age they must get parental consent. In any case all decisions should be discussed with the family. This helps decision making at the time of death to be less painful.

There is no cost involved to being a donor. The recipient pays for all transplant procedures. Organs cannot be bought nor sold (Public Law 98-507) and the National Organ Transplant Act.

Highly qualified physicians make the decision on who receives an organ. Allocations are awarded based on blood type, height, weight, tissue type, length of time on waiting list, medical urgency, and geographical location. The IOM endorses fairness in the nations transplantation system.

During and after the bereavement period a special trained staff is available to assist families who are participants in the organ donor program. The staff is very caring and eighty percent (80%) of my students said that, "maybe I will become an organ donor because I will be dead anyway." By becoming an organ and tissue donor you are giving a gift of hope and life to others.

(Recommended for Ethics, grades 9-12, Biology and General Science, grade 9, Life Science, grades 7-8, and Health, grades 7-11.)

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