



# The *Gift* of Knowledge

Guide for Making Anatomical Gifts  
to the University of Michigan

HIC LOCUS EST UBI MORS  
GAUDET SUCCURERE VITAE

*"This is the place where death delights to help life."*



MEDICAL SCHOOL  
ANATOMICAL DONATION PROGRAM  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



## Gratitude to Donors and Their Families

Michigan Medicine is profoundly grateful to anatomical donors and their families for their contributions to medical education and research. Plaques displayed in each Gross Anatomy laboratory at the University of Michigan Medical School express this gratitude with the following inscription:

*When a family entrusts us with one of their most sacred possessions, you have an obligation to keep faith with them by conducting yourself professionally, respectfully and ethically as though they were ever present. The families and the people themselves who donate their bodies to the University of Michigan have given this charitable, irreplaceable gift to you in confidence that you will gain understanding and knowledge of the human body. So embrace this gift with excitement and be eager to use the gift which you will have forever... the gift of knowledge.*

## The Importance of Anatomical Donations

Anatomical donations are essential to medical education and research. Anatomy courses rely on anatomical donations to give students first-hand knowledge of the anatomical structures of the human body. These courses are among the first and most important in the education of physicians, dentists, nurses, physical therapists and other health professionals.

Anatomical donations are also essential to advanced anatomy studies and research. Physicians in residency programs, practicing physicians, biomedical scientists and others depend on anatomical donations to support new advancements in medical science.



All members of the medical community who rely on anatomical donations, from students in core anatomy courses to professionals in advanced research areas, are greatly indebted to anatomical donors and their families for making their work possible.

## **Anatomical Gifts and the Law**

The State of Michigan first enacted legislation governing anatomical donations in 1958, and most recently revised the statute in 2008. The most recent revision helps ensure that the wishes of the donor are protected and also keeps Michigan law uniform with nearly all other states. Portions of the current law (Public Act 368 of 1978, as amended at Public Act 39 of 2008, also referenced as the RUAGL) are attached at the end of this Guide for reference.

## **Procedure for Making an Anatomical Gift**

A donor may make an anatomical gift of the donor's body to the University of Michigan Medical School as permitted by the RUAGL. To document the intent to make a gift, the University of Michigan has created the attached Donor Authorization form. The Donor Authorization form is also on our website: [medicine.umich.edu/anatomical-donations](http://medicine.umich.edu/anatomical-donations).

## Procedure for Making an Anatomical Gift (continued)

A signed copy of the Donor Authorization may be sent to the University of Michigan Anatomical Donations Program to notify us of the gift. (*See contact information at the end of this guide.*) On receipt of the completed form, a wallet card will be sent to the donor to help notify others of the intent to make an anatomical gift. Funeral homes may also assist with donation arrangements before death.

The completed gift form is a legal document of gift which may be amended or revoked. The gift becomes effective immediately upon death, but is subject to conditions at the time of death and acceptance by the Anatomical Donations Program.

It is advisable to notify the donor's family and legal representative of the intent to make an anatomical donation so that it may be carried out at the time of death. The reading of a will or the discovery of the gift form may come too late to accommodate the donor's wishes.

## Coordination of Anatomical Gifts

A donor may wish to make an anatomical gift of organs for transplantation as well as their body to the Anatomical Donations Program. Organizations such as the Gift of Life and the Anatomical Donations Program coordinate as much as possible to make the most positive use of a donor's gift.

It is not always possible to accept an anatomical gift of the donor's body after an organ or tissue donation due to the needs of our faculty and research staff and restrictions from the tissue banks. In such cases, the Anatomical Donations Program will determine whether the whole body is appropriate for donation based on the circumstances of each donation.

We suggest that the donor inform the family and legal representative whether the donor's priority is for organ or tissue transplantation, or whole body donation for education and research. This will help ensure that the donor's preference will be honored.

Information concerning tissue and organ donation is available at:

### Eversight

3985 Research Park Drive  
Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
Phone: 1-800-247-7250  
[www.eversightvision.org](http://www.eversightvision.org)

### Gift of Life

3861 Research Park Drive  
Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
Phone: 1-866-500-5801  
[www.giftoflifemichigan.org](http://www.giftoflifemichigan.org)

## Procedures at the Time of Death

At time of death, the family or other representative of the donor should arrange promptly for a funeral home to contact the U-M Anatomical Donations Program (734) 764-4359. The Program will coordinate with the funeral home to determine if it can accept the anatomical gift of the donor's body, and provide further instructions. Family or other representatives may also call this number with any questions.

If death occurs at a considerable distance from the University of Michigan Medical School, transportation costs, legal issues, and potential deterioration of the deceased may prohibit delivery of the body to the University of Michigan. One may consider donation to an alternate willed body program. Our website ([medicine.umich.edu/anatomical-donations](http://medicine.umich.edu/anatomical-donations)) has links to other anatomical donations programs in the United States. A funeral director can assist family in making arrangements for delivery to an alternate recipient.

## Disposition of Body Remains

Following the study of the donor's body, the remains are cremated. For temporary donations, ashes are returned to the donor's family or a funeral director for private burial. For permanent donations, ashes are interred at the University of Michigan Anatomical Donations Program Memorial Garden in conjunction with the University of Michigan Annual Memorial Service. Medical students are involved with all aspects of the ceremony. Family and friends of all donors are invited; approximately 750 people attend each year to share memories and help with the healing process.



## Frequently Asked Questions about Anatomical Gifts

### Frequently Asked Questions about Anatomical Gifts

*Q. Is it necessary to include a body donation in the donor's will?*

A. No. The intent to donate may be included in a will, but because a will may not be found in time for delivery of the body to the University, it is more effective to have these instructions readily available on a wallet donation card or donation form. The donor should also advise his or her family and legal representative of the intent to make a donation.

*Q. Are there age restrictions on whole body donation?*

A. Yes. U-M Anatomical Donations Program only accepts donors 18 years of age or older. There is no age *limit* to donation.

*Q. Will the donor or donor's family be paid a fee for a body donation?*

A. No. The state anatomical law (RUAGL) requires that the donation be a gift without compensation.

*Q. Are there costs associated with body donation?*

A. Yes. Although the University of Michigan Anatomical Donations Program does not charge a fee for its services, the donor's family or legal representative is responsible for certain costs. These costs may include:

- charges from the funeral home for transportation, preparation of legal documents, and professional services; and/or
- costs of making alternate arrangements for final disposition if the donation cannot be completed for any reason.

*Q. Are there circumstances when a donation could not be used?*

A. Yes. Medical conditions including emaciation or obesity, extensive burns, mutilation, advanced decomposition or a history of contagious diseases (hepatitis viruses, HIV/AIDS, Creutzfeldt-Jakob, tuberculosis, active MRSA, or COVID-19 infection, VRE, etc.) would make a donated body unusable. Cause of death may also be a factor. To help avoid any surprise or disappointment, family members should be advised that acceptance of a candidate donor is not determined until the time of death and review of medical records.



Q. *What is the procedure at the time of death?*

A. The funeral director should call U-M Anatomical Donations Program at (734) 764-4359 promptly for instructions, so that a determination of acceptability and other arrangements can be made as soon as possible.

Q. *What is the procedure if a donation cannot be used?*

A. If an anatomical donation is not accepted for any reason, the donor's legal representative is responsible for making alternate arrangements at the expense of the donor's estate.

Q. *What are examples of uses for education or research?*

A. Most donations are used to teach medical and dental students, and in continuing education programs. A small number are used to teach students in allied health fields such as nursing and physical therapy. Some donations are used for research, such as by surgeons to study new operative techniques. Some education or research, such as work to increase safety for individuals in the military, law enforcement, or sports, may involve exposures to destructive or damaging forces (e.g. impacts, crashes, ballistic injuries, and blasts). The use of donations for education or research can include photographic, video, virtual reality renderings or media images.

Q. *May an institution other than the University of Michigan use a donor's body?*

A. Possibly. U-M Anatomical Donations Program may, in its sole discretion, allow a donor's body to be utilized by another institution or entity as permitted by the RUAGL for education or research. In these cases, the donor's body will then be returned to the Program for final disposition after the educational or research use is complete.

## Frequently Asked Questions about Body Donation (continued)

Q. *Is it likely that the donor's body will be used in research studying a disease the donor had?*

A. No. Any use for research would be determined by specific researcher requests pending at the time of the donor's death.

Q. *What is the meaning of the terms temporary donation and permanent donation?*

A. **Temporary Donation** means the donor's remains will be used in a manner to be determined by the Anatomical Donations Program and ashes will be ready for return within approximately 24 months.

**Permanent Donation** gives the University the option to keep the donor's remains without time constraints. Following use of the donor's body, the University of Michigan interashes at the University Memorial Garden. When Permanent donation is selected, the donor's body or ashes will not be returned to the donor's representative.

Q. *Will the University of Michigan accept a body if the donor dies out-of-state?*

A. Because of transportation costs, legal issues, and potential deterioration of the donor's body, we recommend that a donor's body be donated to a recipient in the area where death occurs.

Q. *Is it possible for an ambulance service or even the donor's family to deliver the donor's body to the Medical School?*

A. No. A licensed funeral director must arrange for delivery of the donor's body to ensure protection of public health and compliance with all related laws and policies.

Q. *When will work with the donation be completed and the ashes returned?*

A. If a donor chooses a temporary donation, work with the donor is completed and the donor's remains are returned within approximately 24 months. If a donor chooses to make a permanent donation, the ashes are not returned.

Q. *Is there a memorial service for the donors?*

A. Yes. The University of Michigan Medical School conducts an annual memorial burial service commemorating donors. Family members will receive an invitation to the Memorial Service, which is typically held in the fall.

Q. *Can individual markers be purchased?*

A. Yes. The donor or donor's legal representative should make arrangements directly with Washtenong Memorial Park. All costs are the responsibility of the donor or the donor's estate.

Q. *Are donors cremated after the donation process?*

A. Yes. It is the strict policy to cremate all donors after the donor has served their educational or research purpose.

Q. *Can ashes be exhumed after being buried in the University plot?*

A. No. Ashes buried in our cemetery plot cannot and will not be exhumed under any circumstance or situation.

Q. *Will my family receive a report of your findings?*

A. No. We do not conduct autopsies or maintain reports.

---

## **Revised Michigan Anatomical Gift Law – Abridged Provisions**

Selected provisions of the Revised Michigan Anatomical Gift Law, Public Act 368 of 1978, amended as Public Act 39 of 2008, are provided below. The full statute is available on our website at [medicine.umich.edu/anatomical-donations](http://medicine.umich.edu/anatomical-donations).

### **Article 10, Part 101 Act No. 368 Public Acts of 1978**

#### **Sec. 10104.**

Subject to section 10108, an anatomical gift of a donor's body or body part may be made during the life of the donor for the purpose of transplantation, therapy, research, or education in the manner provided in section 10105 by any of the following:

- (a) The donor, if the donor is an adult or if the donor is a minor and meets 1 or more of the following requirements: (i) Is emancipated. (ii) Has been issued a driver license or identification card because the donor is at least 16 years of age.
- (b) An agent of the donor, unless the power of attorney for health care or other record prohibits the agent from making an anatomical gift.
- (c) A parent of the donor, if the donor is an unemancipated minor.
- (d) The donor's guardian.

#### **Sec. 10105.**

(1) A donor may make an anatomical gift by doing any of the following:

- (a) By authorizing a statement or symbol indicating that the donor has made an anatomical gift to be imprinted on the donor's driver license or identification card.

## Revised Michigan Anatomical Gift Law – Abridged Provisions *(continued)*

(b) During a terminal illness or injury of the donor, by any form of communication addressed to at least 2 adults, at least 1 of whom is a disinterested witness. However, the physician who attends the donor during the terminal illness or injury shall not act as a recipient of the communication under this subdivision.

(2) A donor or other person authorized to make an anatomical gift under section 10104 may make a gift by a donor card or other record signed by the donor or other person making the gift or by authorizing that a statement or symbol indicating that the donor has made an anatomical gift be included on a donor registry.

(3) Revocation, suspension, expiration, or cancellation of a driver license or identification card upon which an anatomical gift is indicated does not invalidate the gift.

(4) An anatomical gift made by will takes effect upon the donor's death whether or not the will is probated. Invalidation of the will after the donor's death does not invalidate the gift.

### Sec. 10106.

(1) Subject to section 10108, a donor or other person authorized to make an anatomical gift under section 10104 may amend or revoke an anatomical gift by any of the following means:

(a) A record signed by any of the following: (i) The donor. (ii) The other person authorized to make an anatomical gift under section 10104. (iii) Subject to subsection (2), another individual acting at the direction of the donor or the other person authorized to make an anatomical gift under section 10104 if the donor or other person is physically unable to sign.

(b) A later-executed document of gift that amends or revokes a previous anatomical gift or portion of an anatomical gift, either expressly or by inconsistency.

(2) A record signed pursuant to subsection (1)(a)(iii) shall meet all of the following requirements:

(a) Be witnessed by at least 2 adults, at least 1 of whom is a disinterested witness, who have signed at the request of the donor or the other person.

(b) State that it has been signed and witnessed.

(3) Subject to section 10108, a donor or other person authorized to make an anatomical gift under section 10104 may revoke an anatomical gift by the destruction or cancellation of the document of gift, or the portion of the document of gift used to make the gift, with the intent to revoke the gift.

(4) A donor may amend or revoke an anatomical gift that was not made in a will by any form of communication during a terminal illness or injury addressed to at least 2 adults, at least 1 of whom is a disinterested witness.

A donor who makes an anatomical gift in a will may amend or revoke the gift in the manner provided for amendment or revocation of wills or as provided in subsection (1).

Sec. 10108.

- (1) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (7)...in the absence of an express, contrary indication by the donor, a person other than the donor is barred from making, amending, or revoking an anatomical gift of a donor's body or body part.
- (2) A donor's revocation of an anatomical gift of the donor's body or body part under section 10106 is not a refusal and does not bar another person specified in section 10104 or 10109 from making an anatomical gift of the donor's body or body part under section 10105 or 10110.
- (7) If a donor who is an unemancipated minor dies, a parent of the donor who is reasonably available may revoke or amend an anatomical gift of the donor's body or body part.
- (8) If an unemancipated minor who signed a refusal dies, a parent of the minor who is reasonable available may revoke the minor's refusal.

Sec. 10111.

- (1) An anatomical gift may be made to any of the following persons named in the document of gift:
  - (a) A hospital; accredited medical school, dental school, college, or university; organ procurement organization; or other appropriate person, for research or education.
- (4) [I]f there is more than 1 purpose of an anatomical gift set forth in the document of gift but the purposes are not set forth in any priority, the gift shall be used for transplantation or therapy, if suitable. If the gift cannot be used for transplantation or therapy, the gift may be used for research or education.

Sec. 10113.

- (1) A document of gift need not be delivered during the donor's lifetime to be effective.

Sec. 10114.

- (8) [T]he rights of the person to which a body part passes under section 10111 are superior to the rights of all others with respect to the body part. The person may accept or reject an anatomical gift in whole or in part. Subject to the terms of the document of gift and this part, a person that accepts an anatomical gift of an entire body may allow embalming, burial, or cremation, and use of remains in a funeral service. If the gift is of a body part, the person to which the body part passes under section 10111, upon the death of the donor and before embalming, burial, or cremation, shall cause the body part to be removed without unnecessary mutilation.

Sec. 10122.

- (5) In applying and construing this part, consideration shall be given to the need to promote uniformity of the law with respect to its subject matter among states that enact it.



**MEDICAL SCHOOL  
ANATOMICAL DONATION PROGRAM**  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

**Contact Information**

Anatomical Donations Program  
3767 Medical Science Building II  
1137 Catherine St.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1621

Phone: (734) 764-4359

Fax: (734) 763-6523

Email: [donorinfo@umich.edu](mailto:donorinfo@umich.edu)

**DISCLAIMER:** Although the information in this Guide is about legal issues, it is not intended as legal advice or as a substitute for the advice of your own counsel. While a reasonable effort has been made to compile complete and accurate information in this Guide, the University of Michigan does not assume any liability resulting from any errors or omissions.



## Donor Authorization for Anatomical Gift to the University of Michigan Anatomical Donations Program

### 1. Consent

Being eighteen years of age or over and of sound mind, I hereby offer my body after death as an unrestricted anatomical gift to the University of Michigan Anatomical Donations Program (“Program”).

**Please mail completed forms to:**  
Anatomical Donations Program  
3767 Medical Science Building II  
1137 Catherine St.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1621

- I understand that my accepted body may be used for the purposes of education or research, both within UM or outside UM by another institution, in the sound judgment and sole discretion of the Program.
- I understand that the acceptance and exact use of my body will be at the discretion of the Program. In some cases such use may involve exposures to destructive or damaging forces (e.g., impacts, crashes, ballistic injuries, blasts). Examples of how the gift might be used for education or research include: medical education and training; forensic sciences (e.g., pathology, engineering, anthropology); vehicle safety or the development of protective equipment (e.g., military, law enforcement, sports).
- I understand that, for the purposes of education or research, the Program reserves the right to create and share/distribute photographic, video, extended reality renderings, or other multimedia of my donation in ways that are de-identified and with respect for my dignity.
- I understand that the Program will not return any medical or cosmetic implants, prostheses, or devices.

### 2. Applicable Law and Policies

I understand this donation is subject to applicable law and Program policies in effect at the time of my death.

### 3. Duration of Donation

My preference regarding the duration of my donation is as follows (choose **only one** option):

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Temporary Donation:** My donation will be used in any manner that the Program deems appropriate, within or external to the University of Michigan. Within approximately 24 months of my donation, the Program will cremate the donor’s (my) body and the ashes will be made available for return. I understand that, for the purposes of education or research, the Program reserves the right to preserve and/or retain a portion of my donation indefinitely, including, but not limited to: tissues/histological (microscopic) samples, portions of bone/organs, and whole organs or organ systems. These retained portions will not be included in the ashes that are made available for return after approximately 24 months. Upon the completion of their use, the Program will cremate the retained portions and/or bury those remains at a University of Michigan burial plot. Remains of retained portions will not be returned. **OR,**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Permanent Donation:** The Program may retain my entire donation indefinitely to be used in any manner that the Program deems appropriate, within or external to the University of Michigan, without time constraints on the use of the donor’s body. Following use of the donation, the Program will cremate the donor’s (my) body and bury the remains at the University of Michigan burial plot. When Permanent Donation is selected, the remains will not be returned.

### 4. Release of Medical Information

I authorize any and all health care providers (e.g. hospitals, nursing homes, physician practices) holding my health information at the time of my death to release my health information to the Program and funeral facility personnel for the purpose of implementing my donation. Release of my health information may be in oral and/or written form, including copies of my medical records. This authorization extends to the release of information, if any, regarding: alcohol and drug/abuse treatment; psychosocial and social work counseling; HIV, AIDS or ARC; communicable disease or infections, including sexually transmitted diseases, venereal disease, tuberculosis and hepatitis; and genetic information. The Program will follow all applicable law as well as University of Michigan policies to ensure the confidentiality of my health information, but I understand that once a health care provider or the Program discloses my health information to a recipient, neither the health care provider nor the Program can guarantee that the recipient will not re-disclose my health information. The Program is not liable for the actions of others who may further disclose the information.

### 5. Further Information

This authorization is voluntary and no treatment, payment, or enrollment or eligibility for benefits is conditioned upon my signing this form. This authorization expires only upon the revocation of my anatomical gift. For information on revoking this authorization and delivering a revocation, please contact the Program.

My signature below confirms that I have read the “Gift of Knowledge” informational guide attached to this Donor Authorization form. I understand any questions that may arise may be directed to the Program, by phone at (734) 764-4359 or by email at donorinfo@umich.edu.

### Signatures

#### DONOR

Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr./Other; (Circle one) Name (Please Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

#### WITNESSES

The Donor signed this Authorization for Anatomical Donation, and we, in the Donor’s presence and at the Donor’s request, have provided our names as witnesses to the Donor’s signature. We state that the Donor appears to be at least eighteen years of age and appears to be of sound mind and not under or subject to undue influence.

<p><b>Witness 1</b></p> <p>Name (Please Print) _____</p> <p>Signature _____</p> <p>Street Address _____</p> <p>City, State, Zip Code _____</p> <p>Telephone _____</p>	<p><b>Witness 2</b></p> <p>Name (Please Print) _____</p> <p>Signature _____</p> <p>Street Address _____</p> <p>City, State, Zip Code _____</p> <p>Telephone _____</p>
---	---

**Please retain a copy of this form for your records.**