

No matter how much we prepare, the moment of death will arrive in its own time and in its own way. The experience of dying is different for every person and for every family. Sometimes, planning ahead can help make sure that you feel that you are helping during this final stage. Families can get involved in activities like:

- Choosing a place for a person to spend their last days;
- Knowing what the person's wishes are. The person and the family may make funeral arrangements ahead of time;
- Ensuring that affairs are in order; and
- Finding out who to call when death happens and who will pronounce the person dead and sign the death certificate.

It is important that the person's wishes are known and respected. Planning ahead will reduce the number of decisions that will need to be made right after death and is a chance to talk about arrangements, concerns and feelings. Planning ahead will also reduce family stress during the early time of grief.

A checklist to help you prepare

1. Who needs to be there at the time of death?
2. Who will wash and dress the body? What will they be dressed in?
3. Are there any special spiritual rites or activities that need to be attended to?
4. Are there any last letters or words that people want to have said?
5. Is the person an organ donor? If so, who needs to be advised?
6. What can be done to make sure the funeral is what the person wanted?
7. Who will ensure that their affairs are in order?
8. What do they want to do with their household goods and personal effects?
9. Who can help buy and prepare food for the wake and other activities?
10. Do people need to think about adoption or caring for children and/or pets?

This is a time of adjustment for families. It is essential to hold discussions with the person who is dying about these issues, so that they can be involved in what will happen and when.

Places to get help

Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service

63 Boolimba Street
Narrabundah ACT 2604
Tel: (02) 6284 6220

Canberra Hospital Aboriginal Liaison Officer

Building 3, The Canberra Hospital,
Yamba Drive
Garran ACT 2605
Tel: (02) 6244 2222

Canberra Hospital - Palliative Care

Capital Region Cancer Service
Yamba Drive
Garran ACT 2605
Tel: (02) 6244 2222

Clare Holland House

5 Menindee Drive
Barton ACT 2600
Tel: (02) 6273 0336

ACT Palliative Care Society

PO Box 88
Civic Square ACT 2608
Tel: (02) 6273 9606

Carers ACT, Belconnen Office

Ground Floor, Churches Centre
54 Benjamin Way
Belconnen ACT 2617
Tel: (02) 6296 9900

Carers ACT, Torrens Office

1 Torrens Place
Torrens ACT 2607
Tel: (02) 6296 9900

Calvary Health Care ACT

Mary Potter Circuit
Bruce ACT 2617
Tel: (02) 6201 6111
