

person who knows the family best, knows when the death is expected, or has the opportunity to spend time with the family when the death is unexpected takes the role. Often nurses are in an optimal position to suggest tissue donation after consultation with the attending physician. When possible, the topic should be raised before death occurs. The request should be made in a private and quiet area of the hospital and should be simple and direct with questions, such as “Are you a donor family?” or “Have you ever considered organ donation?”

Many states have legislated a mandatory request for organ or tissue donation when a child dies, especially if the patient is brain dead. Written consent from the family is required before donation can proceed. When requests for organ donation are made, health care practitioners must address common misunderstandings families have about brain death and organ donation ([Franz, DeJong, Wolfe, et al, 1997](#)). Training health care professionals on sensitive approaches to requests for organ donation has been shown to increase families' willingness to consent to organ donation ([Evanisko, Beasley, Brigham, et al, 1998](#); [Workman, Myrick, Meyers, et al, 2013](#)). The option to donate organs should always be separate from the communication of impending or actual death.

Nurses need to be aware of common questions about organ donation to help families make an informed decision. Healthy children who die unexpectedly are excellent candidates for organ donation. Children with cancer, chronic disease, or infection and those who have suffered prolonged cardiac arrest may not be suitable candidates, although this is individually determined. The nurse should ask whether organ donation was discussed with the child or whether the child ever expressed such a wish. Any number of body tissues or organs can be donated (skin, corneas, bone, kidney, heart, liver, pancreas), and their removal does not mutilate or desecrate the body or cause any suffering. The family may have an open casket, and there is no delay in the funeral. There is no cost to the donor family, but organ donation does not eliminate funeral or cremation responsibilities. With the exception of Orthodox Judaism, most religions permit organ donation as long as the recipient benefits from the transplant. In cases of unexplained death, violent death, or suspected suicide, autopsy is required by law. In other instances, it may be optional, and parents should be