



Death with Dignity

June 2014

The Washington State Death with Dignity Act allows a terminally ill adult to obtain a prescription for a lethal dose of medication to self-administer to end his or her life in a humane and dignified manner (RCW 70.245). To qualify to receive a prescription, the adult must be competent to make an informed decision, a resident of Washington State, and have a terminal diagnosis expected to lead to death within six months. The law passed by voter initiative in November 2008 and went into effect in March 2009.

The Death with Dignity Act requires the Department of Health to collect records from physicians and pharmacists who prescribe and dispense lethal doses of medication under the law. These records are defined in WAC 246-978 and include:

- The patient's signed request for medication
- Forms signed by two physicians attesting to the patient's qualifications
- Form signed by a psychologist or psychiatrist attesting to the patient's competence
- Record of the medication dispensed, signed by the pharmacist
- After death reporting form submitted by the attending physician

We review the records submitted by physicians and pharmacists for compliance with reporting requirements. If a record is inadequate or incomplete, we contact the health care provider to request a complete report.

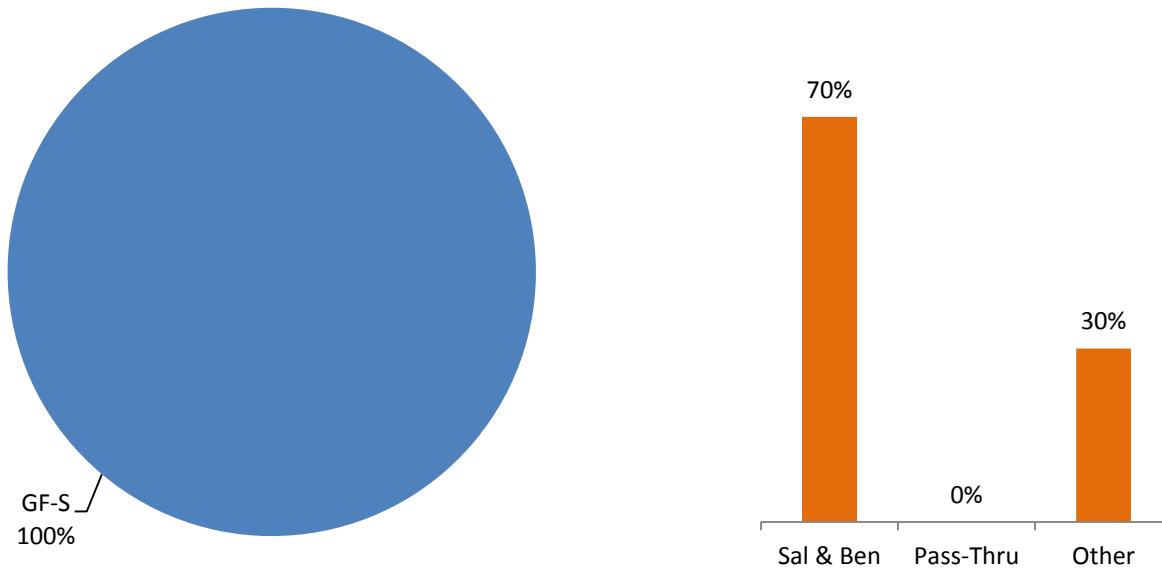
The Death with Dignity Act also directs us to produce an annual statistical report on use of the law. We have published four reports since the law went into effect (see www.doh.wa.gov/dwda). The reports describe how many people have obtained a lethal dose of medication under the law; their demographics, illnesses, and end of life concerns; and the circumstances surrounding their deaths (e.g., if there were complications).

Stakeholders

- Interest groups that support the Death with Dignity law, such as Compassion and Choices of Washington
- Interest groups that oppose the Death with Dignity law, such as Washington State Catholic Conference
- Health care organizations and associations such as:
 - Washington State Medical Association
 - Washington State Hospital Association
 - Washington State Hospice and Palliative Care Organization

2013-15 biennium

Death with Dignity Fiscal Information



	GF-S	Federal	Dedicated	Fees	Total	Sal & Ben	Pass-Thru	Other
Total	47,000	0	0	0	47,000	33,000		14,000

Recent Funding History

2009-11 biennium:

- Received ongoing GF-S funding of \$91,000 to establish the program in March 2009, per Initiative 1000

2011-13 biennium:

- Ongoing GF-S reduction of \$71,000 in carry forward.
- Based on fiscal note, ongoing funding reduced to \$20,000 GF-S biennial after first year of implementation.
- The division redirected GF-S to maintain minimum level of service to continue the program at \$26,000 per year.