

## Washington State Department of Health 2013 Death with Dignity Act Report

### Executive Summary

Washington's Death with Dignity Act allows adult residents in the state with six months or less to live to request lethal doses of medication from physicians. In this report, a participant of the act is defined as someone to whom medication was dispensed under the terms of this law. This report describes available information for the 173 participants for whom medication was dispensed between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2013. It includes data from the documentation received by the Department of Health as of February 28, 2014.

In 2013, medication was dispensed to 173 individuals (defined as 2013 participants):

- Prescriptions were written by 89 different physicians
- Medications were dispensed by 23 different pharmacists

Of the 173 participants in 2013:

- 159 are known to have died
  - 119 died after ingesting the medication
  - 26 died without having ingested the medication
  - For the remaining 14 people who died, ingestion status is unknown
- For the remaining 14 people, the department has received no documentation that indicates death has occurred

The 159 participants who died in 2013 ranged in age from 29 to 95 years old. Ninety-six percent lived west of the Cascades. Of the 159 participants in 2013 who died:

- 77 percent had cancer
- 15 percent had neuro-degenerative disease, including Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)
- 8 percent had other illnesses, including heart and respiratory disease

Of the 151 participants in 2013 who died and for whom we have received a death certificate:

- 97 percent were white, non-Hispanic
- 52 percent were married
- 76 percent had at least some college education

Of the 145 participants in 2013 who died and for whom we have received an After Death Report:

- 95 percent had private, Medicare, Medicaid, or a combination of health insurance
- 91 percent reported to their health care provider concerns about loss of autonomy
- 79 percent reported to their health care provider concerns about loss of dignity
- 89 percent reported to their health care provider concerns about loss of the ability to participate in activities that make life enjoyable

Of the 119 participants in 2013 who died after ingesting the medication:

- 84 percent were at home at the time of death
- 86 percent were enrolled in hospice care when they ingested the medication