

## Quick Facts About Assisted Suicide

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### 1. Assisted Suicide

Assisted suicide means that someone provides the means and/or information for another person to commit suicide. When a physician is involved, the practice is physician-assisted suicide.

### 2. The Oregon and Washington Laws

In Oregon, physician-assisted suicide was legalized in 1997 via a ballot measure. In Washington State, a similar law was passed by another ballot measure in 2008 and went into effect in 2009.

### 3. Problems With Legalization

The Oregon and Washington laws are a recipe for elder abuse and encourage people with years to live to throw away their lives. In Oregon, there are documented cases of the Oregon Health Plan (Medicaid) steering patients to physician-assisted suicide via coverage incentives. Oregon's conventional suicide rate has increased with legalization of assisted suicide, which is consistent with a suicide contagion. Patients and families are traumatized.

The Oregon and Washington laws require the death certificate to be falsified to reflect a natural death via a terminal disease, as opposed to the actual cause of death, a lethal dose. The significance is a lack of transparency and an inability to take legal action against overreaching parties.

### 4. Other States

In the last five years, four states have strengthened their laws against assisted suicide. These states are Arizona, Idaho, Georgia and Louisiana. In August, 2015, the New Mexico Court of Appeals struck down a decision legalizing assisted suicide.

Assisted suicide is legal in Oregon, Washington and Vermont. A bill to legalize physician-assisted suicide passed in California, but is not in effect. In Montana, a court case gives doctors who assist a suicide a legal defense. There is pushback against legalization in all of these states.

### 5. The New York Proposals

New York State has two pending proposals: (1) Bill 2129, the "New York End of Life Options Act; and (2) Bill 5261, the "Patient Self-Determination Act." These bills are similar to the Oregon and Washington laws.

## 6. Trauma for Patients and Families

In 2012, a study was published addressing trauma suffered by people who witnessed a legal assisted suicide in Switzerland. The study found that one out of five family members or friends present at an assisted suicide were traumatized. These people "[E]xperienced full or sub-threshold PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) related to the loss of a close person through assisted suicide." See

<https://choiceisanillusion.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/family-members-traumatized-eur-psych-2012.pdf>

## 7. A Push for Expansion

In Oregon and Washington State, there have been proposals to expand “eligibility” for assisted suicide. To me, the most disturbing was a *Seattle Times* column causally suggesting euthanasia for people unable to support themselves, which would be non-voluntary or involuntary euthanasia. See Jerry Large, "Planning for old age at a premium," *The Seattle Times*, March 8, 2012 at <http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/text/2017693023.html> ("After Monday's column, . . . a few [readers] suggested that if you couldn't save enough money to see you through your old age, you shouldn't expect society to bail you out. *At least a couple mentioned euthanasia as a solution.*") (Emphasis added).

### References:

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3. Nina Shapiro, "Terminal Uncertainty: Washington’s new "Death With Dignity" law allows doctors to help people commit suicide—once they’ve determined that the patient has only six months to live. But what if they’re wrong?," 01/14/09, *The Seattle Weekly* available at <http://www.seattleweekly.com/2009-01-14/news/terminal-uncertainty>
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4. Affidavit of Kenneth Stevens, MD, (regarding steerage in Oregon), at King County Bar Association, [https://choiceisanillusion.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/11-dr-stevens-aff\\_001.pdf](https://choiceisanillusion.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/11-dr-stevens-aff_001.pdf)

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