



Frequently Asked Questions Organ Donation in Colorado Updated on February 20, 2018

What is organ and tissue donation?

There are two types of organ donation: deceased donation and living donation.

Deceased organ, eye, or tissue donation is the process of recovering organs or tissue at the time of the donor's death for transplantation to save another's life. Living solid organ donation occurs when a healthy person donates a kidney or part of the liver to save another's life.

What is the current situation in Colorado?

Since 2006, the transplant waiting list has increased by nearly 50% in Colorado, compared to the national increase of 25.6%. The 16.6% increase in the state's population doesn't justify this difference.

The number of Coloradans in need of a kidney **has almost doubled** over the past 10 years from 970 to 1,884. Last year, 258 Coloradans died while waiting for all types of transplant or became too sick to remain on the wait list, which is 38% more than the number of Coloradans who died as a result of homicide.

243 Coloradans died while waiting for a kidney or a liver or became too sick to remain on the wait list, two organs that can be donated by a living person (a serious complication rate of less than 1% for live kidney donation).

How can we best address the critical shortage of kidneys in Colorado?

Despite the tremendous increase in educational materials and awareness focused on deceased donation, organ donor registration has only increased 8% over the last decade.

Since 95% of Coloradans on the list are waiting for a kidney or liver, **focusing on live donation seems to be the only immediate solution** for maximizing transplantation in our state.

Even with minimal awareness campaigns focused on living donation, last year in our state, **160 living donors saved lives compared to 144 deceased donors**. Imagine how many more potential live donors would step forward if there was more education and awareness.

Who addresses living donation in Colorado?

The American Transplant Foundation (ATF) is the only nonprofit in the state of Colorado that provides three tiers of support for living donors, transplant recipients, and their families. We proactively reduce the transplant wait list by enabling living donation through educational, emotional, and financial support.

Connecting People to Life®

ATF is a grassroots organization that does not receive any funding from the government nor organ recovery fees and relies on individual and community donations. We believe that simply increasing awareness of living donation is not enough. There needs to be infrastructure to support living donors before, during, and after the surgery. ATF strives to provide this for all Coloradans.

1 out of 4 Coloradans who participated in the Foundation's 1+1=LIFE mentorship program either found a living donor or became a living donor, with a total of 19 surgeries facilitated last year. This is a great outcome compared to other living donation education programs.

In January of 2018, ATF has initiated the *Colorado Coalition for Living Organ Donation* by partnering with Donor Alliance and National Kidney Foundation to develop specific strategies for increasing the number of lives saved in Colorado through living donation and transplantation.

What are the benefits of living donation?

In 2014, the American Society of Transplantation stated that living kidney donor transplantation is the best option for most kidney transplant candidates. It is critical that more Coloradans have access to it. The average 5-year survival rate for those who receive a kidney from a living donor is 86% compared to 79% from a deceased donor and 40% for those on dialysis.

There are tremendous economic benefits for living kidney donation as it eliminates substantial "transplant acquisition fees" charged to hospitals by organ procurement organizations which are ultimately paid by Medicare/Medicaid and other insurance plans. On average, for each transplanted patient taken off dialysis, Medicare saves over \$500,000 over the course of 10 years.

Table 1. Organ Donation in Colorado: 2007-2017

	2007	2017	Increase
Percentage of registered donors	60%	68%	8%
Number of residents who died while waiting for a transplant or became too sick to remain on the waiting list	130	258	98.4%
Number of residents who died while waiting for a kidney or liver or became too sick to remain on the waiting list	111	243	119%
Number of deceased organ donors*	78	144	84.6%
Total number of residents waiting for a lifesaving organ	1,700	2,537	49.2%
Number of residents in need of a kidney transplant	970	1,884	94%
Number of kidneys and livers recovered and transplanted*	196	334	70.4%

Sources: UNOS, Donor Alliance's fact sheets for 2007 and 2017 (copies available)

**Data is reported for CO and WY combined; separate data for CO or WY is not available*

Table 2. Living Organ Donation and the American Transplant Foundation’s Programs in Colorado: 2007-2017

	2007	2017
Number of living kidney donors *	107	151
Number of living liver donors *	2	9
Number of undirected unrelated living donors (donation to complete stranger)*	3	9
Number of surgeries taken place with the help of ATF’s 1+1=LIFE Mentorship Program	n/a	19
Number of 1+1=LIFE Mentors in Colorado	n/a	79
Number of active 1+1=LIFE Mentees in Colorado	n/a	22
Number of Coloradans who expressed interest in becoming living donors through ATF’s Potential Living Donor Database	n/a	80
Number of transplant patients assisted with financial grants through Patient Assistance Program	n/a	21

*Source: *UNOS; American Transplant Foundation*

Notes: 1+1=LIFE Mentorship Program established in 2014; Patient Assistance Program has been established in 2011; all funding decisions are being made by ATF volunteers.