



Canadian Association of MAiD
Assessors and Providers



Association Canadienne des Évaluateurs
Et Prestataires de l'AMM

Guidance for assessors and providers of Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) during the COVID-19 pandemic

THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF MAiD ASSESSORS AND PROVIDERS

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Guiding principles

- It is of paramount importance that medical and nursing staff remain safe and healthy so that they may continue to provide care to others during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The safety of patients and their loved ones is a priority.
- The provision of MAiD should remain consistent with existing quality and best-practice standards.
- Key considerations include: availability and use of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), number of individuals in attendance at MAiD procedures, screening of patients and their loved ones for febrile respiratory illness, location of procedure, and the risks and inexperience with oral MAiD protocols.
- MAiD services should not be reduced except where non-availability of key clinical personnel makes this unavoidable.
- MAiD procedures are generally elective. However, the clinical circumstances of some cases may mean that postponement of a MAiD procedure could result in the person not receiving MAiD due to loss of capacity or death. This must be avoided wherever possible.
- MAiD for patients dying of respiratory failure due to COVID-19 will in many cases be impractical as the patient will not be well enough to endure the formal assessment process. It is likely also unnecessary because ideally these patients will readily receive palliative care and sedation and have a peaceful death while not exposing additional medical and nursing staff to infection with COVID-19.

Preparation for MAiD

Provincial regulations and guidelines will dictate how closely MAiD assessors and providers are able to follow these recommendations. CAMAP has separately issued a call for provincial governments to adjust regulations around MAiD process and documentation to reflect the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic. Reasonable allowances have already been achieved in some jurisdictions.

- Assessors and providers should encourage patients to complete their formal request for MAiD using video conferencing with independent witnesses where this is permitted
- When reasonable to do so (dictated by patient ability and willingness), CAMAP encourages the physical distancing afforded by telemedicine consultation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ideally both assessments should be carried out using telemedicine if the patient's condition, the provincial health ministry, and the provincial regulatory colleges allow for this
- MAiD providers should observe regional and facility based protocols concerning the number of visitors that a patient may have in attendance at their MAiD procedure as well as the appropriate use of PPE in any facility in which they provide MAiD.
- MAiD providers working in the community should carefully consider the number of persons that should be permitted to be with the patient during the MAiD procedure, combining common sense and a knowledge of regional protocols. Where the MAiD support nurse or other staff (if any) are provided by a separate organization, that organization's policies on staff safety and the number of persons in attendance should be respected whenever possible.
- The MAiD provider should inform the patient and their family that no person (other than the patient) who has symptoms of a febrile respiratory illness should attend the procedure. A family member should be identified and asked to ensure that those permitted to be present are aware of this requirement.
- The MAiD provider should screen those who intend to be present for the MAiD procedure 2 hours prior to the provider's attendance. The provider may choose to use a provincial screening tool, if available. In the absence of a provincial tool the following is suggested:
 - Does anyone planning to attend have a fever or new onset of cough or difficulty breathing?
 - Has anyone planning to attend travelled outside Canada (*or* the province, *or* the local community, if preferred) in the past 14 days?
 - Has anyone planning to attend had close contact with a confirmed or possible case of COVID-19?
 - Has anyone planning to attend had close contact with anyone with an acute respiratory illness in the past 14 days?

If YES to ANY question - person screens POSITIVE

If NO to ALL questions - person screens NEGATIVE

- If any person screens POSITIVE, has that person yet been in contact with the patient?

If YES to this question - venue screens POSITIVE

If NO to this question - venue screens NEGATIVE and person should be asked not to attend

- Does the patient have respiratory symptoms that cannot be adequately explained by a known illness (e.g. COPD, pulmonary fibrosis, heart failure)

If YES to this question - patient/venue screens POSITIVE

If NO to this question - patient/venue screens NEGATIVE

- If the patient or venue is screen positive (or the patient is known to have COVID-19) the MAiD provider must decide if it is appropriate to proceed as planned. Options will include:
 - proceeding as planned using full PPE
 - postponing the procedure (for example to arrange for full PPE if not already available or a change in venue if necessary)
 - cancellation (for example if the patient's condition is deteriorating and palliative sedation has become an option after discussion with the patient and their family)
- The MAiD provider should explore with the patient and their family the possibility of using technology to allow family and friends to attend virtually (e.g. FaceTime, Skype, Zoom). Some virtual platforms may allow video recording or screen capture. The wishes of any support staff not to have their image captured or broadcast on social media if accidentally captured should be sought and all guests informed.

Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

- Full PPE (surgical mask, eye protection, gloves, gown) should be available to all staff involved in a MAiD procedure so that these may be obtained and employed at short notice (i.e. immediately prior to the planned procedure).
- As a minimum MAiD assessors and providers should follow local or provincial guidances re level of PPE in both facilities and the community setting.
- If no local or provincial guidance exists, in the case of a screen negative patient and venue CAMAP recommends as a minimum the use of:
 - surgical mask
 - gloves
- If the patient is known to have COVID-19 or the venue is screen positive then full PPE should be used:
 - surgical mask
 - eye protection (surgical mask with integral eye shield, or safety glasses/goggles)
 - gloves
 - gown
- If the provider has determined that MAiD should proceed but the patient is using CPAP, BIPAP or nebulizer (aerosol generating medical procedures or treatments) at the time of MAiD or has done so in the previous 24 hours then a N95 mask should be employed in addition to full PPE (even if the patient and venue have screened negative).

Provision of MAiD

- The MAiD provider may consider using a member of the support staff as proxy when the patient's final consent is sought, in order to reduce physical contact.
- The use of IV extension tubing should be considered in order to maximize distancing by the provider from the patient and those in attendance
- MAiD providers should consider the possibility of providing MAiD through the use of oral medication protocols if:
 - the use of IV medication protocols would pose an unacceptable degree of risk to the MAiD provider and support staff.

- MAiD providers local to the patient are not currently available due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and remote supervision of MAiD is permitted by provincial regulations

CAMAP acknowledges the use of publications by the following organizations in the preparation of this statement:

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