

Writing Guide

Have you ever wondered how you could communicate with your loved one's recipient(s)?

When to Write to Your Loved One's Recipient(s);

As a donor family you may wish to communicate with your loved one's recipient(s). The decision to write the recipient is a very personal one and sometimes may be difficult. There is no evidence that says you should wait a specific period of time before writing, and you should be guided by your feelings. It is never "too early" or "too late."

Recipients often welcome and appreciate communication. Recipients sometimes want to express their gratitude to the family who, in their grief, supported a decision to donate. They are also aware of sadness at your loss, and many do not wish to add to your grief by writing. Many wish to know about the individual who gave them the "Gift of Life" that has restored them to health.

Washington Regional Transplant Community (WRTC), this area's local organ and tissue recovery organization, facilitates the delivery of all letters and cards between transplant recipients and donor families. WRTC does so in order to maintain confidentiality between all parties, until that right is waived by both you and the recipient(s). If you think it would be too difficult at first to write a letter to a recipient, consider sending a card. WRTC has appropriate cards available for your use.

Writing to Transplant Recipients:

- It is highly recommended that you send your first correspondence anonymously. It makes it much easier for the recipient to accept the card or letter if they are still unsure about making direct contact with their donor's family. Sign your first name only; do not reveal your address, phone, email, hospital where your loved one died, or any other identifying information.
- Use simple language to appeal to all age groups.

Talk about your loved one.

- Discuss your loved one's family situation, marital status, children or grandchildren.
- Share your loved one's job or occupation, interests and hobbies.
- Avoid giving too much detail and medical information about how your loved one died.
- Talk about your loved one's or your family's decision to donate and its effect.
- If the donation has helped with your grief process, share this with the recipient.
- Wish the recipient well in their recovery.

Will I hear from the Recipient?

You may or may not hear from them. Some recipients, although very grateful, have great difficulty expressing themselves and often fear that writing to the donor family will add to your grief. Recipients have been very ill and often have a long recovery process. Some are afraid to write if there are still health issues. Also, some recipients experience feelings of guilt and sadness that their improved health came as a result of the death of your loved one. Often, your correspondence gives the recipient(s) a signal that your family is ready to hear from them. Other recipients, due to a variety of personal situations, prefer privacy and choose not to respond. Sometimes they have moved and cannot be contacted.

Will I ever be able to communicate directly with the Recipient?

WRTC will facilitate a request for direct, unedited communication between a transplant recipient and his or her donor family when both parties have expressed a desire to have non-anonymous communication. Both parties must sign a waiver releasing their right to confidentiality, which was promised at the time of donation and transplantation.

To Whom Do I Send My Correspondence?

Send your correspondence to the Donor Family Advocates (DFA) at WRTC. We will confirm receipt of your correspondence, and you will be notified if it is unable to be forwarded. If you have included any identifying features such as name, address, photo, etc., the DFA will contact you to discuss how to proceed. It will be necessary for both parties to sign release forms before the correspondence can be forwarded.

Please place your card or letter in an unsealed envelope. On a separate sheet, include:

Your loved one's full name

- Date of your loved one's death
- Your name, address, phone number (and relationship to your loved one), and email address if available

Place these items in another envelope and mail them to:

WRTC Donor Family Advocate
3190 Fairview Park Drive, Suite 700
Falls Church, VA 22042

**Washington Regional
Transplant Community**