

Writing Guide

Have you ever wondered how to thank the family of the donor that made your transplant possible?

When to Write to Your Donor Family:

As a transplant recipient, many will encourage you to write to your donor's family. Donor families welcome and appreciate communication. When you acknowledge the donor family's loss and express your thanks, you confirm that their loved one's gift was meaningful. This can offer the family comfort and peace during a very difficult time.

The decision about when is the right time to correspond with your donor's family is a very personal one. You may write at any time. It is never too early or late to express gratitude for the kind and unselfish gift you have received. We encourage you to write when you are feeling better and more active, because you will have more positive things to say. Some recipients write at one month, one year, or several years later, when their fear of organ rejection is gone.

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 donor family.

If you think it would be too difficult at first to write a letter to the donor family, consider sending a thank you card. WRTC has appropriate cards available for your use.

What should I include in my letter?

- Be sure to recognize the donor family's loss and thank them for the gift.
- It is highly recommended to send your first correspondence anonymously. It makes it much easier for them to accept the thank you if they are still unsure about making direct contact with any recipients.
- Use simple language to appeal to all age groups.

Talk about yourself:

- Talk about your family situation, marital status, children or grandchildren.
- Share your job or occupation, interests and hobbies.
- Talk about your transplant experience.
- Describe how long you waited for your transplant.
- Explain what your health was like before the transplant and now afterwards.
- What has happened since your transplant?
- Have you celebrated another birthday?

- Has your son or daughter gotten married?
- Have you become a parent or grandparent?
- Have you been able to return to work or school?
- Have you done something you always dreamed about?

Will I hear from the donor family?

You may or may not hear from them. Most families are glad to receive such contact, and many donor families have said that writing to recipients about their loved ones and their decision to donate helps with the grieving process. Other donor families, even though they are comfortable with the decision to donate, may still be privately grieving and choose not to respond to recipient letters. Sometimes families move and cannot be contacted.

Will I ever be able to communicate directly with the donor family?

WRTC will facilitate a request for direct, unedited communication between you and your 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 full name, address, phone number, and email address if available;
- Date of your surgery and organ you received;
- Name of your transplant center.

Place both your correspondence and the sheet of information 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**