

Care at the End of Life

Statement of Position

The Salvation Army believes that each person has inherent value that cannot be removed by human action or health condition. Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD), which has been legal in Canada since 2016, disregards this inherent value through the direct and intentional ending of a person's life. The Salvation Army commits to communicate to persons who suffer that they continue to have inherent value, remain worthy of respect, are loved and will not be abandoned. The Salvation Army promotes access to quality palliative care.

Grounds for the Position

Human life is a sacred gift from God. The value of each person, sometimes called human dignity, is neither conferred nor withheld by human action or health condition. It is inherent in each person. As individuals and communities, we are called to respect the value of human life and to show each other compassion and care at all times.

The Salvation Army believes MAiD, which allows for euthanasia and assisted suicide, undermines human dignity as it directly and intentionally ends a person's life. The Salvation Army maintains that respect for the value of human life includes optimal care in the process of dying.

The Salvation Army promotes access to quality palliative care. Palliative care is holistic, attending to the physical, mental, relational and spiritual dimensions of the dying person. It also provides support to the person's family, direct care providers and community.

Decisions about medical treatment at the end of life should focus on the benefits and burdens experienced by the person and should not be intended to hasten death or unnecessarily delay it. Medical management of pain and other symptoms is not euthanasia; and it is not euthanasia to withdraw, withhold or forgo treatment that would only prolong the dying process.

As far as possible, decision-making around end-of-life care should remain in the hands of the dying person in collaboration with competent health care professionals, assisted by loved ones whom the dying person wants to be involved. If the dying person is no longer capable of being involved in their own health care decisions,

another person should be designated to act as a substitute decision-maker. Legally their decisions will not include consent to MAiD on behalf of the patient.

Even with the most advanced medical science and attentive caregiving, cure is not always possible, and suffering cannot always be alleviated. Many know the fear associated with suffering and the frustration of being unable to relieve it fully. At no time, however, should a person's life be deemed as not worth living, nor should anyone's suffering be used as a justification for intentionally causing their death.

In a culture that often devalues the lives of those experiencing vulnerability, The Salvation Army is committed to protecting them. The Salvation Army commits to communicate to all persons within its sphere of influence that they continue to have inherent value, remain worthy of respect, are loved and will not be abandoned.

Resource:

The Salvation Army International Positional Statement Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide (2013):

https://s3.amazonaws.com/cache.salvationarmy.org/41dc0810-5725-47a0-bdb6-6b466dc7066f_English+Euthanasia+and+assisted+suicide+IPS.pdf



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Position statements outline the official views of The Salvation Army on moral and social issues of current relevance. They express the Christian values and principles underlying these views. Position statements are not binding on individual Salvation Army members, employees, volunteers or clients, but are published for their guidance. The Salvation Army upholds the dignity and equality of all people.