

STAFS Living Donor (LD) Donation Program FAQs

STAFS is a state-of-the-art research, education, and training center designed to advance academic and technical knowledge in the application of anthropology, human anatomy, forensic science, biology, and chemistry. Bodies donated to the STAFS facility are a precious asset and are a pivotal component of our research and teaching activities.

The skeleton of each donation is a valuable asset that is permanently accessioned to the STAFS Skeletal Collection for continued research, education, and training by scientists, investigators, students, law enforcement officials and forensic practitioners.

Does completion of the living donor application packet mean I am automatically accepted into the program upon my death?

No. All donations are accepted on a case-by-case basis at the time of their death, with acceptance based upon research need, regardless of Living Donor status. **Completion of Living Donor paperwork with our facility does not guarantee acceptance into our program**, but instead significantly expedites the donation process if acceptance does occur at the time of death. **STAFS highly recommends that all donors have an alternative plan for final disposition in the event STAFS is unable to accept your donation at the time of your passing.**

What does my family need to do once I pass away?

STAFS will need to be notified of your passing as soon as possible so we can confirm that we have your paperwork on file, and if you are a candidate for research at that time. If accepted into the program, STAFS will coordinate with the releasing agency and your legal next of kin (or informant) to determine transport and next steps.

What happens if I am denied after my passing, and cannot donate to STAFS?

Your family will need to move forward with your alternative final disposition plan in the event of donation denial (cremation, burial, etc). **STAFS highly recommends that all donors have an alternative plan for final disposition in the event STAFS is unable to accept your donation at the time of your passing.**

Does the donation packet need to be notarized?

No, the donation packet does not have to be notarized. However, it DOES have to have the **signatures of two (2) witnesses on the SAME date as the Living Donor's signature**. If the signatures are not on the same date, STAFS will require the paperwork be completed again to ensure that the signature of the Living Donor was properly witnessed as required.

What paperwork/documents must be completed for my donation to be considered "complete"?

STAFS requires completion of the Living Donor application packet, as well as a copy of the donor's legal photo ID for all Living Donor donations. The packet **MUST** be signed by the Living Donor, along with two witnesses on the appropriate pages.

Will I receive a donor card once my file is considered complete?

Yes. STAFS will mail a Living Donor card to you once **your original documents and a copy of your legal photo ID** have been received. This card contains our contact information for after you pass. We recommend you provide copies of this card (and/or copies of your completed donor packet) to your family, primary care physician, lawyer, etc so they are also aware of your intentions for your final disposition.

Will STAFS notify me of when my paperwork is received and/or with any edits needed?

Yes, STAFS will notify you when we receive your paperwork, as well as with any edits or changes needed.

What should I do if my Living Donor card is damaged, lost, or stolen?

This donor card is to provide our contact information to the person handling your final disposition after you pass. STAFS does not need this card to determine if you are a donor; STAFS only needs your original completed documents. To request a new card, please contact us at stafs@shsu.edu or at 936-294-2310.

What if I want to appoint someone else besides my next-of-kin as the person to help coordinate my final arrangements after I pass away?

You and the party you wish to appoint can complete a legal document called *Appointment to Control Disposition of Remains* that can change who is legally in charge of your final disposition after you pass away. STAFS must have a copy of this completed legal document on file with your completed living donor application for this option to be viable for you and the party of your choosing.

Can I be an organ donor and still be a living donor?

Yes. Organ donation of any kind is not an automatic disqualifier for will body donation to STAFS.

How should I notify STAFS of changes to my contact information, medical information, and/or my legal next of kin?

Please contact us at stafs@shsu.edu or 936-294-2310 so we can assist. Depending on what specifically is being changed, you may need to complete additional paperwork.

Who is considered my legal next of kin (NOK)

According to the *Texas Health and Safety Code, Title 8. Death and Disposition of the Body, Subtitle B. Disposition of the Body, Chapter 692A. Revised Uniform Anatomical Gift Act, Sec. 692A.009- Who May Make Anatomical Gift of Decedent's Body or Part*, a decedent's legal next of kin is prioritized by the following order:

1. *an agent of the decedent at the time of death who could have made an anatomical gift under Section 692A.004(2) immediately before the decedent's death;*
 - ***STAFS requires proof of this designation in the form of a copy of the legal documents signed by the decedent (Appointment for Disposition of Remains form)***
2. *the spouse of the decedent;*
3. *adult children of the decedent;*
 - ***STAFS will require a Majority of Siblings Agreement be signed by at least the majority of children for any legal decision not made by the Living Donor for STAFS purposes.***
 - ***In the event a majority is not reached, STAFS will deny the request and/or require a court order.***
4. *parents of the decedent;*
5. *adult siblings of the decedent;*
 - ***STAFS will require a Majority of Siblings Agreement be signed by at least the majority of siblings for any legal decision not made by the Living Donor for STAFS purposes.***
 - ***In the event a majority is not reached, STAFS will deny the request and/or require a court order.***
6. *adult grandchildren of the decedent;*
7. *grandparents of the decedent;*
8. *an adult who exhibited special care and concern for the decedent;*

9. *the persons who were acting as the guardians of the person of the decedent at the time of death;*
10. *the hospital administrator; and*
11. *any other person having the authority to dispose of the decedent's body.*

When is STAFS operational and how do I contact the STAFS facility?

STAFS' business hours are Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm. STAFS also observes all university and public holidays. To contact the STAFS facility, please call us at 936-294-2310 or email us at stafs@shsu.edu. We are only able to answer calls/emails during business hours. However, messages left on voicemail will be attended to the next business day. For the SHSU university holiday schedule, please visit <https://www.shsu.edu/dept/hr/benefits/holidays.html>.

What type of research takes place at STAFS?

STAFS is a research facility with a focus of study on the application of medical, natural, and forensic sciences to the human body. Your body donation will benefit students, doctors, anthropologists, entomologists, forensic scientists, law enforcement officers, medico-legal death investigators, and educators.

Will I be cremated, and my remains returned to my loved ones?

STAFS does not cremate the remains and return them to the next of kin. Instead, all remains are archived into the STAFS Skeletal Collection, where they continue to provide an invaluable resource to education, research, and training.

What is the death certificate process, and how does my family obtain copies?

STAFS completes the demographics portion of the death certificate, and routes it through the legal process in the State of Texas. However, STAFS does not issue the death certificate. Once released to the state, death certificates are obtained through the County Clerk's office in the county of your passing.

What is the transportation and storage process?

STAFS will transport donors free of charge if they are being released from a facility within 200 miles of Huntsville, TX and within the state of Texas. **STAFS can only transport from facilities with cold storage capabilities** (funeral homes, medical examiner's offices, hospitals, etc). **STAFS does not transport from private residences, hospice facilities, nursing homes, or the like.** Donors in these situations must arrange for transportation to a funeral home within our transport radius for STAFS to transport to our facility.

Is there a cost to donating to STAFS?

STAFS does not charge any cost to donate to our facility. However, STAFS does not cover any costs that may arise from releasing agencies, such as a funeral home. Unfortunately, STAFS cannot always immediately transport, which means the next of kin will be responsible for any transport, storage, or miscellaneous costs with the releasing facility until STAFS can arrange transport.

What does my family need to do if my body is outside of the transport radius at the time of my death?

STAFS can only transport within 200 miles of Huntsville, TX and within the state of Texas. Your family will need to coordinate transport of your body either within that range, or to the STAFS Facility directly. STAFS and SHSU are not responsible for any fees associated with any transportation or storage arrangements made to accommodate STAFS transport radius.

Can an individual request specific research they would like to be a part of, such as burial?

STAFS makes every effort to accommodate research specific requests but cannot guarantee that any or all requests will be granted. There is a section at the end of the donation paperwork titled “Research Preferences” for you to list any preferences you may have.

Can an individual request specific research they WOULD NOT like to be a part of?

STAFS will always honor the selection made by the next of kin for all research with an “opt-in or opt-out” selection found within the donation paperwork. This research includes trauma research, genealogy research, and potentially identifiable research. STAFS makes every effort to accommodate research specific requests found within the “Research Preferences” section but cannot guarantee that any or all of these requests will be granted.

Who can STAFS release any identifiable information to for a Living Donor?

STAFS will only speak with either the legal next of kin listed on the paperwork, the informant listed on the paperwork (if other than the next of kin), or any legal entities involved with the death certificate process (local registrars, medical certifiers etc). If STAFS is contacted by anyone other than the before mentioned individuals/entities, STAFS will not release any identifiable information and will contact the next of kin to inform them.

Can I visit STAFS before my passing, or my family visit me at STAFS after my passing?

Unfortunately, STAFS does not have the capability of providing viewing services and does not permit families to access the facility. However, STAFS does provide the next of kin with a keepsake in honor of their donation, and will invite the next of kin, as well as their family/friends, to attend the annual memorial service held the following year. This keepsake and memorial service invitation will be sent to the legal next of kin listed on your paperwork.

Please feel free to contact us at 936-294-2310 or stafs@shsu.edu with any additional questions or concerns you may have about donating to STAFS. Please also feel free to visit our website at www.shsu.edu/stafs for more information.

We would love to hear from you! Please feel free to visit our website at www.shsu.edu/stafs to submit your story on why you chose to give the ultimate gift.