



## ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE of ORANGE

PASTORAL CENTER: COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT  
13280 CHAPMAN AVENUE, GARDEN GROVE, CA 92840

### **Systematic Approach to Evaluate Physician Assisted (PAD) Suicide Requests**

#### ***1. Determine the nature of the request.***

- Is the person *seeking immediate assistance* or considering the possibility of hastened death in the future?
- Is the person *airing thoughts* about ending life without a specific intent or plan?
- Is the person *frustrated* with living with illness, but not seriously contemplating ending life?

#### ***2. Clarify the cause(s) of intractable suffering.***

- Is there a loss of functional autonomy?
- Does the person feel he or she is a burden or exhausted from prolonged dying?
- Is there severe pain or other unrelieved physical symptoms?
- Is the distress mainly emotional or spiritual?

#### ***3. Evaluate the person's decision-making capacity.***

- Is there impairment affecting comprehension and judgment?
- Does the person's request seem rational and proportionate to the clinical situation?
- Is the person's request consistent with long standing values?

#### ***4. Explore emotional factors.***

- Do feelings of depression, worthlessness, excessive guilt, or fear substantially interfere with the patient's judgment?
- Does the person have untreated or undertreated depression or other mental illness?

#### ***5. Explore situational factors.***

- Does the person have a poor social network?
- Are there coercive influences such as looming bankruptcy?
- Is the person subject to emotional, financial or other forms of exploitation or abuse?

#### **6. Initial Responses to PAD Requests**

- Utilize open-ended questions to understand the concerns that led the person to request PAD



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- Respond empathically and strengthen the therapeutic relationship through respectful and non-judgmental dialogue
- Re-evaluate and modify treatment of pain and all physical symptoms
- Identify and address depression, anxiety, and/or spiritual suffering
- Consult with experts in spiritual or psychological suffering when appropriate
- Consult with colleagues experienced in palliative care/hospice as needed
- Commit to the person the intention of working toward a mutually acceptable solution for the patient's suffering