

District of Columbia Death with Dignity Act

2021 Data Summary



Death with Dignity Executive Summary

DC | **HEALTH**

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GOVERNMENT OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DC MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

The District of Columbia Death with Dignity Act of 2016, DC Law 21-182, was effective on February 18, 2017, and applicable as of June 6, 2017. The Act establishes a process by which competent terminally ill residents of the District of Columbia can legally obtain a physician's prescription for drugs to end their life in a humane and peaceful manner. Terminally ill patients must be District of Columbia residents who have been medically confirmed to have less than six months to live.

2021 Statistics

The DC Health is required by law to collect compliance information and issue an annual report. The participation summary is for the period of February 19, 2020, to February 18, 2021. During this period, there were seven prescriptions written for a covered medication¹, seven qualified patients² with written prescribed and dispensed medications. Six of the qualified patients died after ingesting the prescribed covered medications. One qualified patient died before ingesting prescribed covered medications. Four physicians wrote prescriptions for covered medications (Table 1). Figure 1 shows trends from 2018 to 2021.

¹ As defined in D.C. Official Code § 7-661.01(5).

² As defined in D.C. Official Code § 7-661.01(15).

Table 1. Death with Dignity Participants, District of Columbia, 2021

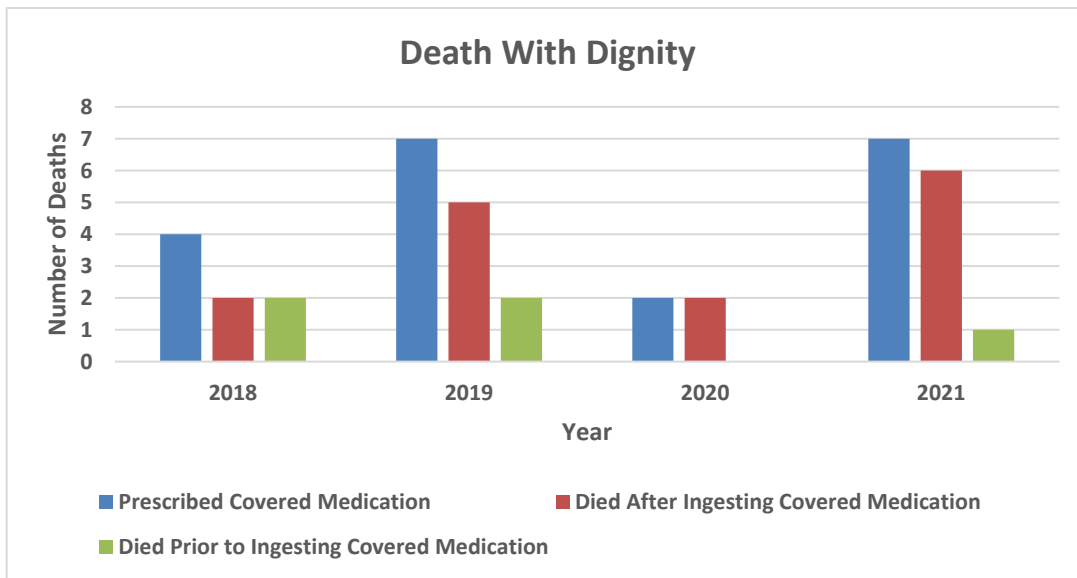
| Number of qualified patients for whom a prescription for a covered medication was written. | Number of known qualified patients who died each year for whom a prescription for a covered medication was written, and the cause of death of those patients. | | | Number of known deaths in the District from using a covered medication. | | Number of physicians who wrote prescriptions for a covered medication. |
|---|---|-----------------|---------|---|-----------------|--|
| 7 | 7 | | | 6 | | 4 |
| Demographic characteristics for qualified patients who consumed a covered medication and died. | | | | | | |
| Age at death | 74 | 98 | 51 | 62 | 54 | 59 |
| Education level, if known | Master's Degree | Master's Degree | Unknown | Master's Degree | Master's Degree | Doctorate |
| Race | White | White | White | White | White | White |
| Sex | Female | Male | Female | Female | Female | Male |
| Type of insurance, including whether or not they had insurance, if known | Government ³ | Government | Unknown | Commercial ⁴ | Commercial | Commercial |
| Terminal disease | Neurological Disease | Cardiac Disease | Cancer | Cancer | Cancer | Cancer |
| Patients for whom a prescription for a covered medication was written but died prior to ingesting the covered medication. | | | | | | |
| Age at death | 64 | | | | | |
| Education level, if known | Unknown | | | | | |
| Race | White | | | | | |
| Sex | Male | | | | | |
| Type of insurance, including whether or not they had insurance, if known | Commercial | | | | | |
| Terminal disease | Cancer | | | | | |

Source: District of Columbia Department of Health, Health Regulation and Licensing Administration

³ Government health insurance refers to any insurance program run by U.S. federal, state, or local governments in which people have some or all of their healthcare costs paid for by the government. The two main types of public health insurance are Medicare and Medicaid.

⁴ Commercial health insurance, also called private health insurance, is coverage issued by a private company or entity; such health insurance does not include any type of health insurance coverage provided or maintained by a government-run program.

Figure 1. Number of Death with Dignity participants and known deaths, District of Columbia, 2018 to 2021.



Source: District of Columbia Department of Health, Health Regulation and Licensing Administration