

Donor Letter

Privacy and Respect

Donor families have the chance or option to save a life through organ donation. Their identities remain anonymous. Each family's loss is personal. How family members cope with their loss may determine their readiness to be in touch with recipient families.

The donor family has given you a lifesaving gift. Your letter is a way to express your support and thanks to the donor family.

We know letters to the donor family help with their healing. We are careful to protect their privacy as well as yours. Therefore, initial letters should not involve any identifying information.

Letter Content

The decision to write your donor family is a personal one. If you find it is too difficult to write a letter, a card can also be comforting to the family. We have included some examples to help you write a letter. There may be other things you may want to include.

To keep the letter confidential, do not use the following:

- last name
- address, city, state
- phone number
- email address
- mention of Nebraska Medicine

Please use any information that might help the donor family “picture” you.

This letter most likely will be read and shared with other donor family members. Keep your comments positive. Even though the outcomes of some transplants are not as successful as others the donation is a gift given during a difficult time. The donor family's wishes were to save a life.

Some examples include:

- Address the letter “Dear Donor Family”
- Recognize the donor family's gift and include thanks for this gift
- If you wish, express your condolences for their loss
- Use your first name or nickname only; do not use your last name
- If you choose to leave out your first name, simply sign as a grateful recipient, liver and/or intestinal recipient, friend, etc.
- Your age and gender
- Your family makeup situation such as are you married? Do you have children, or grandchildren.
- Your hobbies or interests
- Your job. Do not use your employer's name or recognizable title
- Explain what has happened in your life since your transplant. Did you return to school, get a new job, have children, travel
- Describe your health right now and future plans
- Let them know whether you would be open to future letters from the donor family

- Remember the religion of the donor family is unknown. Be considerate of this with religious comments
- Other family members may send letters to the donor family
- Be careful about sending letters around the holidays, anniversary of donor's death, etc.

Mailing Your Letter

A Nebraska Medicine Donate Life Services employee will first review your letter to make sure the guidelines are followed. Next, it is mailed to the organ procurement organization (OPO) that worked with your donor's family. The OPO will then send the letter to the donor family. Most families are happy to receive a letter from the recipient. Every donor family is given the option of not reading the recipient's letter. Some donor families move and cannot be contacted. If your letter cannot be delivered you will be notified

Where Should I Send My Letter?

- Place your card or letter in a blank unsealed envelope. Please do not place a stamp on it or write your return address or your full name on this envelope
- Add another piece of paper with your full name and the date of your transplant in this unsealed envelope

- Place the unsealed envelope into another envelope addressed to:

Donate Life Services
Nebraska Medicine
988136 Nebraska Medical Center
Omaha, NE 68198-8136

Will I Hear from the Donor's Family?

You may or may not hear from the donor's family. Some donor families have said writing about their loved one and their decision to donate helps them in the grieving process. Even though they are comfortable with their decision to donate, other families prefer privacy and choose not to write the recipients. Many donor families will wait until they have heard from a recipient before writing to that person.

Letters may be a one-direction, one-time note of thanks from you, or it could become an exchange of letters between donor family and recipient. Each relationship will be different. It is important to respect the comfort level of the donor family with the timing and frequency of sending letters.

If you would like further assistance in writing your donor family, please feel free to call us at 800.956.7426 or 402.559.9566.