

# Summary Report

## Death with Dignity Laws

Health care professionals are trained to “first do no harm,” but in the context of end-of-life treatment, that simple directive can be difficult to interpret. In the United States, the legal landscape in this area has evolved over the past 25 years. In 1990, the US Supreme Court ruled that physicians and other health care providers could withhold medical treatment at the direction of a patient or the patient’s directed agent. To date, patients are often asked about living wills and their desire to sign (or not sign) a “do not resuscitate” form when entering hospitals.

More recently, a movement to provide patients’ help in dying has been termed “death with dignity” and “assisted suicide.” Federal law does not currently address euthanasia or “mercy killings” in terminal patients who seek a physician’s aid to end their own suffering. Rather, the patient’s right to obtain a physician’s or other health care provider’s help to end their life is established by state law.

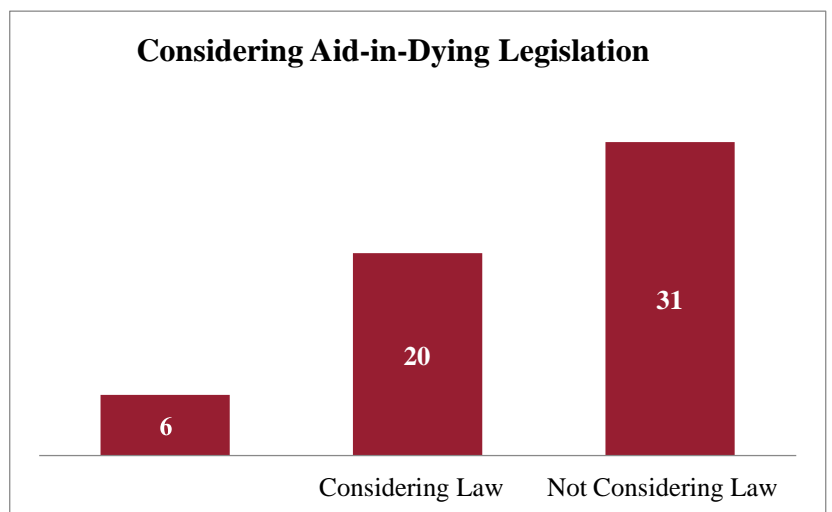
This data explores which states have enacted death with dignity legislation, which outlaw physician-assisted suicide, which make the practice criminal and which are considering changes to current state policy legalizing the practice under certain circumstances.

Most states do not allow patients to end their lives – with or without the aid of a doctor or other health care provider.

California became the fifth state to enact a law giving doctors and health care providers authority to take an active role in a patient’s death. California enacted a law that will allow the practice effective June 9, 2016.

Most states allowing physician assisted suicide take pains to limit the practice to terminally ill patients laws expected to die within a certain period of time. Most also provide rigorous guidelines to ensure the patient really wants the help of the physician to hasten death, that the decision is not sudden, impulsive or coerced and that the patient has no hope of recovery.

The remaining 41 states and the District of Columbia prohibit the practice:



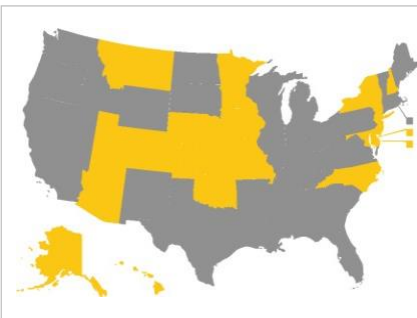


**States Prohibiting Physician-Assisted Suicide**

Forty-one states and the District of Columbia have laws that explicitly prohibit physician-assisted suicide.

Jurisdictions: AK, AL, AR, AZ, CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, HI, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, ND, NE, NH,

Although only a handful of states now allow the practice, a growing number of states and the District of Columbia are considering bills to create the right to death with dignity:



**States Considering Aid-in-Dying Legislation**

Eighteen states and the District of Columbia are considering legislation that would change the state's physician-assisted suicidelaw.

Jurisdictions: AK, AZ, CO, DC, DE, HI, IA, KS, MD, MN, MO, MT, NC, NE, NH, NJ, NY, OK, UT