



# **National Donor Designation Report Card**

**April 2008**

## **Introduction**

Donate Life America (DLA) is a not-for-profit alliance of national organizations and state teams dedicated to inspiring people to save and enhance lives through organ, eye and tissue donation.

In the fall of 2006, Donate Life America launched the Donor Designation Collaborative (DDC). The DDC is a national effort to improve donation rates by ensuring that each state has an effective system for allowing individuals to designate themselves as donors. In addition to helping states create new registries or improve existing registries, the DDC has focused on encouraging state teams to test, adopt and share best practices that measurably increase the number of registered donors.

Since the initiation of the DDC, registries have been founded in Maine, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee and Texas. As well, registries in Arizona and Iowa have undergone major improvement. Those in New Jersey and Wisconsin currently are being enhanced.

In just one year, the number of registered donors in the United States has increased by more than six million. These individuals joined more than 62 million people already designated as lifesaving donors to reach a total of 69,037,650 registered donors. This increase is substantial and provides tremendous momentum for Donate Life America and its state partners.

This report card gives an overview of the data now available on the donor designation and registry system in the United States based on data reported by a majority of states. It identifies states that have made significant improvements to their registries and can serve as a reference to those states whose improvements are yet to come.

## **The Need**

There are nearly 100,000 people waiting for lifesaving organ transplants in the United States. A million more suffer from blindness, medical conditions or devastating injuries that can be successfully treated by donated corneas or tissue.

## **The Opportunity**

Ninety percent of Americans say they support donation, but only 35 percent of licensed drivers or ID card holders nationwide have enrolled in a state donor registry to ensure that their decision to donate is honored. A primary goal of the DDC is to close that gap and increase the number of people who take action to support donation by registering as donors in their respective states.

## **The Impact on Organ, Eye and Tissue Recovery, 2007**

- At least 1,521 organ donors in the United States had joined their state donor registry before death. These donors saved approximately 4,600 lives. In cases where the donors had not registered as donors before death, the donation decision was made by the family/next of kin of each donor.
- A reported 6,178 tissue donors in the United States had joined their state registry before their death. It is estimated that these donors enhanced or saved the lives of approximately 300,000 people.

- More than 7,100 eye donors in the United States had joined their state registry before their death. It is estimated that these donors gave sight to more than 14,000 people.

## The Role of Motor Vehicle Departments

State motor vehicle departments (MVD) play an essential role in supporting the lifesaving mission of state donor registries. In 47 states (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico), a majority of donors enroll via their motor vehicle departments, with the remainder signing up online or through other channels.

## State Comparisons

The following charts highlight the top states in terms of key measures reported to the DDC.

### 1. Actionable Donor Designation (ADD) Share, 2007

ADD share is the percentage of all licensed drivers who are designated donors.

State	Licensed Drivers**	ADD Designated Donors	ADD Share
UT	1,619,085	1,138,950	70%
OK	2,264,151	1,555,171	69%
IN	4,246,189	2,900,000*	68%
AK	489,024	326,682	67%
MN	3,086,610	2,040,007	66%
NM	1,338,246	874,249	65%
VA	5,210,685	3,411,334	65%
GA	5,906,834	3,582,321	61%
ND	468,711	284,544	61%
OH	7,739,410	4,670,880	60%

Top Ten ADD Share as of 12/31/07

\*Estimated

\*\*Source: Federal Highway Administration, October 2007

## 2. Designation Rate, 2007

Designation rate is the percentage of people applying for or renewing their driver's license or ID cards who register to be donors.

State	Designated Donors	DLs & IDs Issued	Designation Rate
IA	241,250	357,524	67%
CO	551,455	913,723	60%
OH	1,649,874	3,172,448	52%
UT	329,689	664,107	50%
AK	52,403	110,132	48%
NE	221,259	535,638	41%
HI	63,816	162,236	39%
VA	166,285	503,948	33%
MO	463,679	1,412,706	33%
KY	198,955	641,600	31%

Top Ten Designation Rate as of 12/31/07

## Effective Registry Design

The DDC has determined that in order to maximize their potential to save lives, donor registries should be designed with the following characteristics:

- Donor designation is considered legally binding consent
- Includes consent for tissue donation
- Individuals can enroll through a dedicated Web site
- MVD enrolls donors via drivers license **and** ID card applications **and** renewals
- No follow-up step required for MVD enrollment
- MVD exports donor records to registry database
- Organ, eye and tissue recovery agencies can independently perform donor searches

## Story of a Registered Donor

The tragic death of the University of North Carolina sports mascot Jason Ray during the 2007 NCAA basketball tournament is a powerful story of lifesaving donation. As one who was beloved by many and who lived life to its fullest, it was a particularly agonizing time for his parents. Jason's mother knew he had registered as an organ and tissue donor when he renewed his drivers license and that he was committed to donation and its lifesaving capabilities. His parents were able to take some comfort from his death knowing that his wishes were being honored and people were being given the opportunity to live a longer, more complete life. Jason's story was publicized in a national sports news program, *Ray of Hope*, on ESPN and soon the entire country learned of his selfless gift and the power of joining a donor registry. As a result, thousands joined donor registries and countless more lives have and will be saved.

## Conclusion/Recommendation

The number of lives saved in 2007 by those who designated themselves as donors is estimated to be greater than 4,000, and the overall number impacted by organ, eye and tissue donation more than 100,000. State donor registries and the state teams working to increase the number of people signing up as designated donors will continue to play an important role in national efforts to increase donations and save and heal lives.

It is imperative that all states have effective donor registries that allow individuals who want to donate life through organ, eye and tissue donation to sign up through an easily accessible, single-step process that includes the state's motor vehicle department. An effective donor designation system requires each organization that coordinates organ, eye and or tissue donation to check the donor registry for every potential donor. When registries are less than fully accessible to people who wish to sign up or to recovery organizations that rely on the documentation, the opportunity to save and improve lives is compromised. We hope that the state governments that are in a position to authorize donor designation systems will seek to make them as effective as possible.

## Terms

*Actionable Donor Designation (ADD): An individual's commitment to donate recorded in a searchable donor registry*

*Actionable Donor Designation (ADD) Share: Percentage of all licensed drivers or ID holders who have designated themselves as donors on a state registry*

*Designation Rate: Rate at which individuals join the state donor registry as a percentage of all drivers licenses and ID cards issued*

*Donor Designation: A documented, legally binding commitment by an individual to make an anatomical gift that can be revoked only by that individual*

*Donor Registry: A searchable database of individuals who have designated themselves as donors*

*Effective Registry: A donor registry with best-practice characteristics that support the donor's designation, maximize opportunities to enroll and streamline donor searches*