
**Report to
The Vermont Legislature**

Organ and Tissue Donation Workgroup Final Report

In Accordance with Act 32, 2014, Sections 3 &4

Submitted to: House Committee on Human Services
Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

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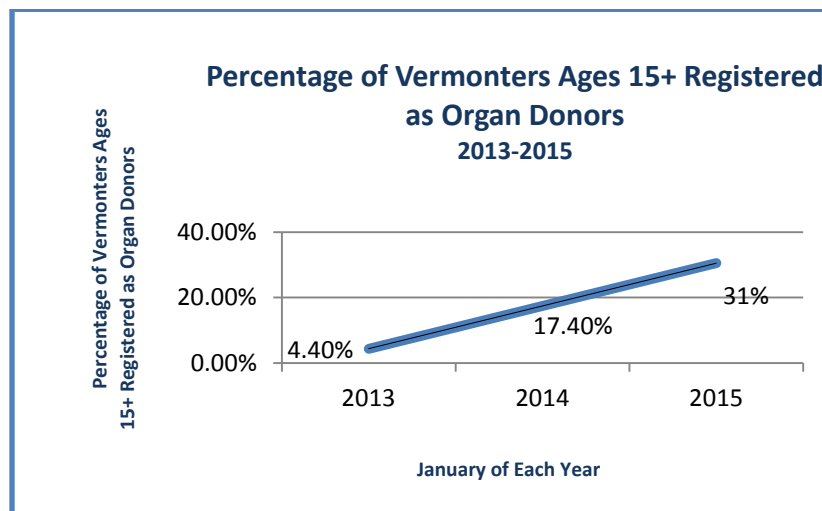
In 2013, the Vermont General Assembly passed Act 32, *An Act Relating to Anatomical Gifts*. Among other provisions of this law is the creation of an Organ and Tissue Donation Working Group (Workgroup), chaired by the Commissioner of Health. Sections 3 and 4 of the Act specify the issues to be studied by the group, all of which relate to increasing organ and tissue donation. The Commissioner was charged with reporting on the activities of the Workgroup with an initial status report in January, 2014 followed by a final report in January, 2015. The workgroup's first report is available at <http://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Documents/Reports/295948.PDF>. The focus of the 2014 report was on committee research and findings related to live organ donation.

As the final report called for by Act 32, this report discusses the Workgroup's activities during 2014 and, as required by Act 32, makes a recommendation about establishing an ongoing advisory council on organ and tissue donation.

Status of Organ Donation in Vermont

The primary purpose of the Workgroup is to promote and increase registered organ donors and live organ donation in Vermont. Since the Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) implemented its system of requiring every license applicant or renewal to indicate whether they want to become organ donors, Vermont has seen a dramatic increase in the number of registered donors. Table I. presents data on registered donors since DMV implemented its system. Monitoring the status of registered organ donors is a routine Workgroup activity.

Table I.



The DMV plays an essential role in recruiting registered organ donors because 95% of all people who register as organ and tissue donors do so at DMV. Vermont is striving to achieve at least a 50% registration rate. To increase the percentage of Vermonters who become registered donors, the Workgroup's mission is to develop and implement strategies for increasing donation rates. The following summarizes the activities of the Workgroup to do so in 2014.

Workgroup Activities during 2014:

- The Workgroup met twice in 2014 to plan activities and monitor the status of registered donors in Vermont.
- The Workgroup participated in the annual Governor's Proclamation of April as Organ Donation Month by Governor Shumlin in his ceremonial office at the Statehouse. So many people attended the event that the room could not accommodate everyone who came.
- Participation on the Spare Parts relay team for the annual Burlington City Marathon. Commissioner of Health Dr. Harry Chen, chair of the Organ Donation Workgroup, ran a leg in the race.
- Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and Department of Health staff continued to work on identifying and analyzing the demographic profiles of individuals who have chosen to register as donors when they apply for a driver's license or renew their license. The initial data were analyzed but additional analysis will be needed to provide more accurate data for informing future promotional activities.
- The Workgroup was one of two organizations designated to receive memorial donations in honor of an individual who was a kidney recipient, who had worked tirelessly to advance the cause of organ donation and who died in 2014. Generous memorial donations totaled \$1843., and the funds were deposited into the Organ Donation Special fund created by Act 32 (2013), Section 5. The act specifies that contributions to the special fund be used to promote organ donation. Funds were used for a full page add in the Burlington Free Press to promote organ donation, and the Workgroup has discussed using additional funds for promotional activities such as city bus billboards. One of the reasons data on the demographic profiles of organ donors is so important is so promotional activities can be targeted to demographic groups that have historically shown higher rates of organ donor registration.

- The University of Vermont Medical Center welcomed a new transplant surgeon in 2014. Dr. Carlos Marroquin joined the workgroup and will be an enthusiastic participant in ongoing work.
- The workgroup heard a presentation on tissue donation and use from representatives of the New England Organ Bank and Jeff Knight, a funeral director who serves in the Organ and Tissue Donation Workgroup. It was a helpful overview of the broad use of donated cadaver tissues used frequently in ophthalmological, orthopedic and other medical treatment.
- The group adopted a new promotion tag line initially for use on posters at DMV offices. The tagline is *Do you have a heart?* and is a triple entendre referring both to the heart that appears on drivers' licenses if an individual registers as an organ donor, to the organ itself and to its symbolic meaning. The group wants to create posters for the entrances to DMV offices so that applicants are prompted to respond favorably to the answer on the license application. The group wants to continue its work on organ donor promotion by developing this tagline into a campaign.

Act 32 requires this final report to make a recommendation about whether or not VDH should establish an ongoing Advisory Council on Organ and Tissue Donation. This was discussed at the November 2014 meeting of the Workgroup, and committee representatives, including the Department of Motor Vehicles, enthusiastically expressed interest in continuing the Workgroup. Workgroup members agreed to contact key legislators to sponsor a bill that would authorize continuation of the group.