You are probably reading this brochure because something serious has happened to a loved one.

Trying to cope with your grief and to understand everything the physicians and nurses are telling you can be overwhelming.

Although this information will not take away your pain and loss, it may help you and your family better understand what is happening.

It is important to understand brain death so that you can make decisions for your loved one.

More questions may come up when talking with family or friends. Be sure to discuss any concerns with your loved one’s health care team.

When you return home...

- You may wish to contact your clergy before deciding on a date/place for the service.
- Make an appointment with a funeral home.
- Your funeral director will assist you in obtaining necessary copies of the death certificate. You can be prepared by having the following information:
  - Birth date
  - Birthplace
  - Father’s name
  - Mother’s name (maiden)
  - Social Security number
- You may be contacted by a representative from Gift of Life Michigan or the Michigan Eye-Bank to discuss your options for donation.
What does brain death mean?
When someone is brain dead, blood and oxygen no longer flow to the brain. The brain stops working and will not recover.

How does a physician decide that my loved one is brain dead?
Physicians conduct tests to determine whether there is brain activity. A physical exam will be completed on your loved one. There may be additional tests. Ask your physician to explain all the tests that have been done on your loved one.

Here are some test examples:

**Cerebral Blood Flow Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Blood Flow to the Brain</th>
<th>Blood Flow to the Brain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Blood flow to the brain &amp; normal electric brain activity (EEG)" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Blood flow to the brain &amp; normal electric brain activity (EEG)" /></td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Cerebral Angiogram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="EEG" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="No blood flow to the brain &amp; missing electric brain activity (Zero line EEG)" /></td>
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Is it possible that my loved one is just in a coma?
No. Brain death is beyond a coma. A person in a coma still has some brain activity and function. When brain death happens, all brain function stops and cannot return.

How can the heart continue to beat after a person is brain dead?
Once a person is declared brain dead, the person is medically and legally dead. The heart does not need a message from the brain to work. It just needs oxygen from the ventilator (breathing machine).

Is there anything else that can be done?
Everything possible is done to save your loved one's life before brain death is declared. Once a physician determines your loved one is brain dead, there is no chance for the person to recover. He or she has died.

Does a person feel any pain or suffering if he or she is brain dead?
No. When someone has no brain activity or function there is no longer any pain or suffering. That is because pain impulses originate from the brain.

What happens to the body after brain death?
Soon after brain death, the organs — heart, liver, kidneys, lungs, pancreas and intestines — will stop functioning. The ventilator may delay this loss of function.

Will removing the ventilator be the same as causing the death of my loved one?
No. The brain dead person is already medically and legally dead. You cannot cause death by removing ventilator support. A brain dead can no longer breathe on their own, so the ventilator provides oxygen to the lungs; this causes the chest to rise and fall, much like a balloon inflating and deflating.

How can we deal with our struggle between hope and letting go?
This is an extraordinarily difficult time for families. You may wish to contact your clergy or the hospital’s pastoral care or social work services so they can help guide you through this process.

After brain death is declared, what happens next?
A health care professional will talk to you about certain end-of-life decisions that you need to make at this time. One of those decisions may be the opportunity for organ and tissue donation.