

Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) – Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

Customer and resident information policy

August 2026



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Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD)

This document explains Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) and how at IRT we support residents and customers in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) who ask about or choose to access VAD.

VAD is one end-of-life option available to some people with a serious and terminal illness. Choosing VAD is always voluntary, and people can change their mind at any time.

This information is designed to help you understand:

- what VAD is
- who may be eligible
- how to ask for information
- how we support you and your choices
- what our staff can and cannot do.

What is Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD)?

VAD is when a person who meets strict legal criteria chooses to take medication that brings about their death. There are two ways this can happen:

1. Self-administration – the person takes the medication themselves.
2. Practitioner administration – a trained and authorised VAD health practitioner gives the medication. This cannot be an IRT clinician.

VAD is regulated by law in the ACT and includes many safeguards to protect people.

You can stop the VAD process at any time.

Palliative care and VAD

Palliative care focuses on comfort, dignity, and quality of life when someone has a life-limiting illness. If you choose to explore or access VAD:

- you will still receive palliative care
- you do not have to choose one or the other.

We will continue to support your comfort and care regardless of your decision.

Who can access VAD in the ACT?

Under ACT law, a person must meet **all** the following criteria to access VAD:

- Be 18 years or older.
- Have lived in the ACT for at least the past 12 months (or qualify for an exemption).
- Have a serious and advanced illness that is expected to cause death.
- Be experiencing suffering that cannot be adequately relieved.

- Have decision-making capacity at all stages.
- Be acting voluntarily, without pressure from anyone.

Having a disability or mental illness alone does **not** make someone eligible, but people with disabilities or mental illness may access VAD if they also meet all other criteria.

Only authorised medical practitioners can assess eligibility.

How to ask about VAD

If you want information about VAD, you:

- can ask an IRT Registered Nurse at your care home or if you're an IRT Home Care customer, contact your Care Partner or Program Coordinator
- do not need to make a formal request straight away.

Our care staff (such as personal care workers) cannot discuss VAD in detail, but they will help you contact a Registered Nurse or Care Partner/Program Coordinator who can support you.

A Registered Nurse or Care Partner/Program Coordinator can:

- help you contact the ACT Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service (VAD CNS)
- provide you with the service's contact details within two business days of your request, in accordance with the *ACT Voluntary Assisted Dying Act*
- inform your doctor if you would like to discuss VAD
- support communication, including interpreters or aids if needed.

The VAD CNS helps residents, customers, families, and care homes with information, support, and referral pathways and can be contacted at:

ACT Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service

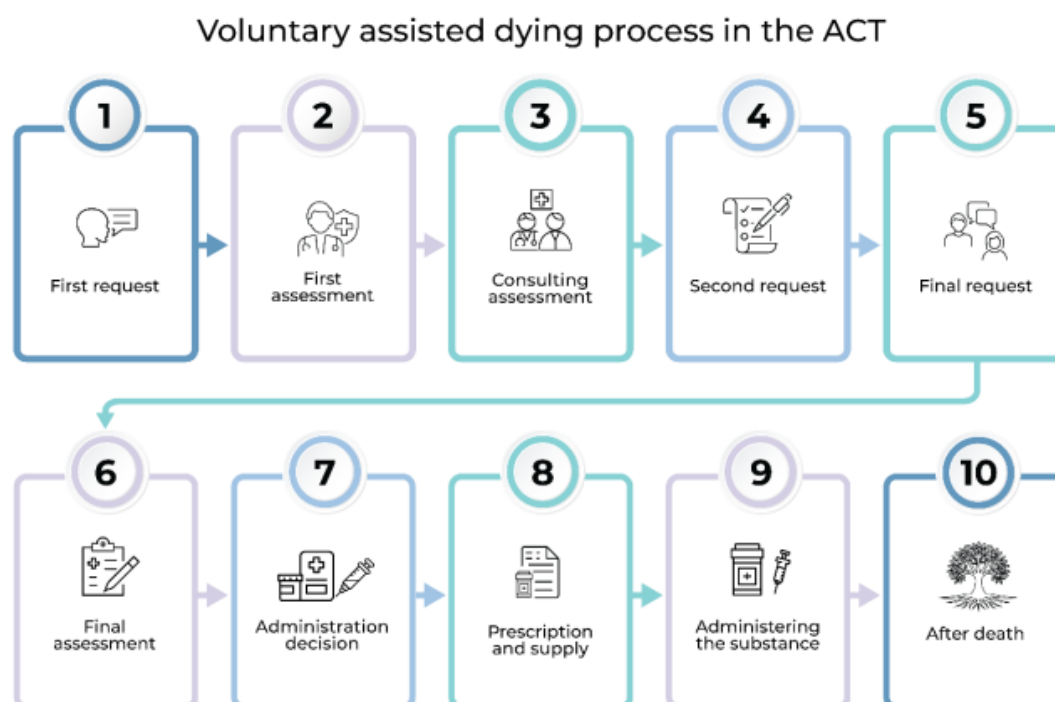
Phone: (02) 5124 1888

Email: VAD.CareNavigators@act.gov.au

The VAD CNS can provide:

- confidential information
- guidance on the process
- support for you and your family.

Overview of the VAD process in the ACT



VAD at IRT

We do not provide or organise VAD services for IRT residents or customers in the ACT. Some of our staff can provide basic information about VAD, however we do not provide detailed information or guidance about the VAD process. This also means our staff are unable to assist with requests or complete assessments under the ACT VAD process.

However, residents at our residential care homes are able to access VAD services themselves or through other medical practitioners (such as their own GP/an authorised VAD coordinating practitioner).

We will not withdraw or refuse to provide care to a resident or customer because:

- they have enquired about VAD
- they have made, or are likely to make, a request to access VAD.

ACT law also prohibits a residential care home from withdrawing or refusing to provide care services for these reasons only.

Relevant persons and transfers

We support your choice to involve someone you trust throughout the VAD process. This person is known as a relevant person.

A relevant person may be:

- an authorised practitioner
- an employee of the VAD CNS or VAD Pharmacy Service
- a person acting as a witness, agent or contact person
- a person providing interpreting and/or translating services.

A relevant person may also be someone who does not normally provide contracted services to IRT. An IRT staff member cannot be a relevant person.

If you want information about VAD or want to access VAD services, and you agree to meet with a relevant person, IRT will help make this happen. Where possible, IRT will arrange for the relevant person to visit you at your residential care home at a time that suits you.

IRT will help you transfer to and from another place to meet with the relevant person if:

- the relevant person cannot visit at a suitable time, or
- they cannot meet with you at your residential care home, and it is reasonable for you to travel.

If the relevant person is not available, or your deciding practitioner believes it is not reasonable for you to transfer to see them, another relevant person may be arranged.

If you need to leave your residential care home to attend VAD appointments or receive VAD services, IRT will support you to return to your residential care home afterwards.

You are also welcome to involve your formal and informal supporters during your VAD journey.

Storage of VAD medication

If you choose **self-administration** VAD medication, it is important to know:

- at IRT we **do not store VAD medication** on site
- we cannot provide a locked cupboard for VAD medication
- a **contact person** (chosen by you) is responsible for bringing and keeping the medication safe when you require it. Your contact person cannot be an IRT employee.

Our staff cannot hold, store, dispose of, or manage VAD medication.

Being present at the time of death

You decide:

- who is with you
- where and when the medication is taken or administered.

Our staff may be present at the time of your death only if you wish for them to be there and they feel comfortable to do so. They cannot assist with the VAD administration or be used as a witness.

After death, we will work alongside the VAD CNS to support your family and carers with privacy, respect, and attention to any cultural or spiritual needs.

Privacy and confidentiality

Your decision about VAD is private.

We will:

- only share information with people directly involved in your care
- respect your wishes about who knows and who is involved.

Support for you, your family and friends

Family and friends can support you in ways you choose, including:

- emotional support
- being present
- helping with planning.

Support services and grief resources are available and you can also call these free services:

- **Lifeline** on 131 114 – open 24 hours for crisis telephone support.
- **Griefline** on 1300 845 745 – open 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week.
- **Grief Australia** on 1800 642 066 – open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.
- **Canberra Grief Centre** on 0409 966 515 – open 9am to 5pm, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.
- **Solace ACT** on 02 6297 1052.
- **13YARN** on 139 276 – open 24 hours for crisis telephone support. Yarn with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter.

Changing your mind

You can:

- pause the process
- stop the process
- decide not to proceed.

This can happen at any stage, and your care will continue regardless of your choice.

This document is published for the purposes of meeting IRT's requirements under section 108 of the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2024 (ACT)* and constitutes a policy of IRT.