

August 15, 1995: Approved by the Right-To-Die Symposium Task Force
September 13, 1995: Approved by the Executive Committee
September 20, 1995: Approved by the Board of Directors

POSITION ON END-OF-LIFE DECISIONS

The Milwaukee Jewish Council for Community Relations recommends that laws, regulations and medical policies not inhibit the ability of members of the Jewish community from acting in conformity with their religious teachings and values regarding end-of-life decisions. Preserving the autonomy of individuals, their family and clergy in this decision-making process respects the diversity of religious and ethical views within the Jewish community; contributes to the protection of freedom of conscience; and promotes the free exercise of religion.

Therefore, the Council:

1. Opposes enactment of a state law permitting physician-assisted suicide because active intervention by a physician to facilitate suicide is contrary to the Halacha, the traditional Jewish religious law.
2. Supports laws, regulations and medical policies that fulfill the halachic directive of reducing patient suffering when the patient is in the final stages of dying. Jewish religious teachings clearly differentiate between active and passive intervention. There is no religious obligation to prolong life or begin treatment if death is imminent.
3. Encourages patients and families, when confronting decisions about these life and death situations, to include their rabbis in their consultations so that they are fully informed about the Jewish theology regarding such situations.

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