

Measure at a Glance

CBE #5602: Rate of Referred Patients that are Approached for an Organ Donation in the Organ Procurement Organization's Donation Service Area in a Calendar Year

Measure Summary (Where does this measure seek to improve care?)

This measure looks at how often an organ procurement organization (OPO) talks with patients or their families about organ donation. An OPO is a non-profit group that manages the organ donation process. A referral happens when a hospital contacts the OPO about a patient who may be a possible organ donor.

The measure then counts how many of these conversations happen for every 100 referrals in a calendar year. This measure applies to all patients referred to an OPO, regardless of payer.

OPO staff first review the referred patient and determine if the patient may be suitable for donation. If appropriate, they then have an “approach” conversation about organ donation with the patient, patient’s family, or next of kin. The conversation can be in person or via telephone or telehealth. The measure includes all approach conversations, even if donation does not happen.

The measure does not include courtesy calls where a family has requested donation information, but the OPO has already decided not to pursue donation.

Meaningfulness (Why does this matter to patients, and how could it improve their care?)

This measure focuses on conversations between an OPO and patients or their families about organ donation. These conversations happen after a hospital refers a patient for possible donation. Families may need time, information, and support to make informed decisions. Without a conversation, patients and their next of kin may be unaware of or uninformed about donation possibilities.

Patients and families have shared that communication is important during this time. Families may struggle to process a large amount of information when they are under stress. Trained OPO staff talk with families, provide support, and guide discussions about donation. This measure reflects the importance of communication and the role these conversations play in helping families understand their options.

Usability (How will providers use this measure to improve care delivery?)

This measure provides information about how often OPOs make approach conversations with patients or their families after a referral.

OPOs can use this measure to:

- Understand their level of effort in regard to these conversations.

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- Review situations where an approach did not occur and look for root causes.
- Guide actions in their quality improvement programs, such as improving staff training, working with hospitals, and reviewing missed approach cases.

Feasibility (How can this measure be implemented without adding burden for providers and patients while still improving care?)

There is little to no additional burden to use this measure. This measure uses data that OPOs already collect during their routine work. Electronic donor records (EDRs) store these data and help track donor information. OPOs capture all required data elements in structured fields, which allow users to enter data in set, organized ways. OPOs also perform regular quality checks to identify and fix missing or incorrect information.

Staff may need to enter some data manually when referrals are made by phone.

The measure does not require major changes to workflow, and OPOs did not report major barriers during measure testing and feedback activities.

OPOs handle data using privacy protections, including secure systems and the use of unique case identifiers instead of patient names.

Impact (How will using this measure improve patient experiences and outcomes?)

This measure focuses on whether OPOs have conversations (approaches) with patients or their families about organ donation. These conversations are a key step before donation can be authorized. When OPO staff have an approach conversation with the patient's family or next of kin, the family may be more likely to authorize donation, leading to more organs for transplant. Without these conversations, potential donors and their families may not know about donation options, which means families may not have the opportunity to authorize donation and fewer organs may become available for transplant.

This measure may also help OPOs understand how often approach conversations occur and identify situations where conversations are not happening. By reviewing these situations, OPOs can explore possible reasons, such as timing, hospital processes, or available resources. These efforts may support improvements in how OPOs respond to referrals and carry out donation discussions, which may influence overall donation outcomes.

Performance Gap (Based on current performance, where and how much care can improve?)

The current measures used by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), Donation Rate and Organ Transplantation Rate, do not assess whether conversations about organ donation occur between the OPO and patients or their families. Important parts of the donation process may be missed.

The "Approach Rates" from six OPOs between 2021 and 2024 ranged from a low of 13 to a high of 36 per 100 referrals. The differences rates show that some OPOs approach a higher share of referred patients than others. This variation suggests opportunities to improve how consistently OPOs conduct approach conversations and to better understand why some referred patients are not approached.

Disclaimer: Battelle used generative artificial intelligence in the initial drafting of this document. Actual humans with relevant expertise subsequently validated and revised the content.