

RECOGNIZING ORGAN DONORS WITH AN HONOR WALK

What is an Honor Walk?

An honor walk is a way for the hospital staff to support and recognize the heroic gift of organ donation. During a walk, hospital staff line the hallway and pay tribute to the donor as they are being escorted to the operating room for organ recovery. These memorable moments give hospital staff the chance to honor the donor, their family, and the heroic decision to give the gift of life through organ donation.

Honor walks have become common in hospitals around the country. They are organized by the hospital, often at the request of the donor's family. There are many things to consider when arranging an honor walk and all should be done at the discretion of the hospital staff and the communications team if media or filming is involved. The following considerations may be helpful as you begin to plan.

Establishing a Process

- How will the hospital decide whether to offer an honor walk to a family? Will this be offered to every donor family or only those who request it?
- Who will communicate with the family about the walk?
- What departments need to be consulted when creating this process? (legal, risk, communications/marketing, security, etc.)
- What route(s) will be used for the walk from each unit?
- Will the walk impact operations along the route?
- How long will the walk take from each unit?
- How much time will you allow for the family to say goodbye when they arrive at the OR?
- Who will guide the family through the walk and escort them out of the OR?
- How will staff and visitors be informed or redirected?
- What information will be shared with staff?
- Once the process is created, how will staff be trained?
- What is the policy for photographs and video during the walk?

Communication and Participation

- What units/staff will be invited to participate and how will they be notified?
- Who will communicate the schedule, route, pace, and purpose of the walk to staff?
- Who will communicate with LifeShare Carolinas and the hospital-based communications/marketing team about the walk?

Taking Pictures and Video

- Has the family consented to photography and/or video?
- If no, include this in all communication with staff and determine who will enforce this.
- If yes, contact communications/marketing.
- Who will take the pictures or video?
- Does the family want the pictures and video shared publicly? (social media, news outlets, websites, etc.)
- Consider the route to the OR and ensure other patients and/or patient information does not appear in any pictures or video.

In order to maintain consistency for all donor families in our service area, LifeShare Carolinas can only help with walks in a limited capacity.

LifeShare Carolinas CAN

- Provide advice on how to respect the donation process and honor the donor and their family.
- Connect you with other hospitals doing honor walks for advice and guidance.
- Help with communicating information to the donor family.
- Help obtain signed release forms from the family.

LifeShare Carolinas CANNOT

- Take or assist with pictures or video.
- Initiate or coordinate an honor walk.
- Enforce hospital guidelines or policy on honor walks.
- Publicize the identity of the donor without a signed media release for the hospital and LifeShare.

