



STAFS Next of Kin (NOK) Donation Program FAQs

STAFS is a state-of-the-art research, education, and training center designed to advance academic and technical knowledge in the application of anthropology, human anatomy, forensic science, biology, and chemistry. Bodies donated to the STAFS facility are a precious asset and are a pivotal component of our research and teaching activities.

The skeleton of each donation is a valuable asset that is permanently accessioned to the STAFS Skeletal Collection for continued research, education, and training by scientists, investigators, students, law enforcement officials and forensic practitioners.

Does the donation packet need to be notarized?

No, the donation packet does not have to be notarized. However, it DOES have to have the signatures of two (2) witnesses on the SAME date as the next of kin signature. If the signatures are not on the same date, STAFS will require the paperwork be completed again in order to ensure that the signature of the next of kin was properly witnessed.

Who can legally donate a person's body once they have passed?

According to the Texas Health and Safety Code, Title 8. Death and Disposition of the Body, Subtitle B. Disposition of the Body, Chapter 692A. Revised Uniform Anatomical Gift Act, Sec. 692A.009- Who May Make Anatomical Gift of Decedent's Body or Part, a decedent's body must be donated by the legal next of kin, which is prioritized by the following order:

1. *an agent of the decedent at the time of death who could have made an anatomical gift under Section 692A.004(2) immediately before the decedent's death;*
 - **STAFS requires proof of this designation in the form of a copy of the legal documents signed by the decedent (that is, Appointment for Disposition of Remains form)**
2. *the spouse of the decedent;*
3. *adult children of the decedent;*
 - **STAFS requires the majority of children sign the Majority of Children/Siblings Agreement form.**
 - **In the event a majority is not reached, STAFS will deny the donation.**
4. *parents of the decedent;*
5. *adult siblings of the decedent;*
 - **STAFS requires the majority of siblings sign the Majority of Children/Siblings Agreement form.**
 - **In the event a majority is not reached, STAFS will deny the donation.**
6. *adult grandchildren of the decedent;*
7. *grandparents of the decedent;*
8. *an adult who exhibited special care and concern for the decedent;*
9. *the persons who were acting as the guardians of the person of the decedent at the time of death;*
10. *the hospital administrator; and*
11. *any other person having the authority to dispose of the decedent's body.*

What paperwork/documents must be completed for my donation to be considered "complete"?

STAFS requires completion of the Next of Kin (NOK) Donation packet, as well as a copy of the next of kin's legal ID for all donations. In donations with multiple next of kins, such as multiple siblings or



multiple children, STAFS also requires the Majority of Children/Siblings Agreement be completed, and IDs for each person.

When is STAFS operational and how do I contact the STAFS facility?

STAFS' business hours are Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm. STAFS also observes all university and public holidays. To contact the STAFS facility, please call us at 936-294-2310 or email us at stafs@shsu.edu. We are only able to answer calls/emails during business hours. However, messages left on voicemail will be attended to the next business day. For the SHSU university holiday schedule, please visit <https://www.shsu.edu/dept/hr/benefits/holidays.html>.

What type of research takes place at STAFS?

STAFS is a research facility with a focus of study on the application of medical, natural, and forensic sciences to the human body. Your body donation will benefit students, doctors, anthropologists, entomologists, forensic scientists, law enforcement officers, medico-legal death investigators, and educators.

Will my loved one be cremated and returned to me?

STAFS does not cremate the remains and return them to the next of kin. Instead, all remains are archived into the STAFS Skeletal Collection, where they continue to provide an invaluable resource to education, research, and training.

What is the death certificate process, and how do I obtain copies?

STAFS completes the demographics portion of the death certificate, and routes it through the legal process in the State of Texas. However, STAFS does not issue the death certificate. Once released to the state, death certificates are obtained through the County Clerk's office in the county that your loved one passed away.

What is the transportation and storage process?

STAFS will transport donors free of charge if they are being released from a facility within 200 miles of Huntsville, TX and within the state of Texas. STAFS does not transport from private residences, hospice facilities, nursing homes, or the like. Donors in these situations must arrange for transportation to a funeral home within our transport radius for STAFS to transport to our facility. STAFS can only transport from facilities with cold storage capabilities, such as a hospital, funeral home, or medical examiner's office.

Will STAFS notify me of when the transportation process is complete?

Yes, STAFS will notify the next of kin when their loved one is in our care.

Is there a cost to donating to STAFS?

STAFS does not charge any cost to donate to our facility. However, STAFS does not cover any costs that may arise from releasing agencies, such as a funeral home. Unfortunately, STAFS cannot always immediately transport, which means the next of kin will be responsible for any transport, storage, or miscellaneous costs with the releasing facility until STAFS can arrange transport.

What do I need to do if my loved one has been accepted, but is outside of the transport radius?

STAFS recommends that you work with a funeral home in your area to make transport arrangements. This funeral home will need to contact us at 936-294-2310 during business hours to ensure STAFS has accepted the donation, coordinate where and when the transportation will take place. Please note that STAFS does not cover any of these costs.

Can an individual request specific research they would like to be a part of, such as burial?

STAFS makes every effort to accommodate research specific requests but cannot guarantee that any or all requests will be granted. There is a section at the end of the donation paperwork titled “Research Preferences” for you to list any preferences you may have.

Can an individual request specific research they WOULD NOT like to be a part of?

STAFS will always honor the selection made by the next of kin for all research with an “opt-in or opt-out” selection found within the donation paperwork. This research includes trauma research, genealogy research, and potentially identifiable research. STAFS makes every effort to accommodate research specific requests found within the “Research Preferences” section but cannot guarantee that any or all of these requests will be granted.

Who can STAFS release any identifiable information about my loved one to?

STAFS will only speak with either the legal next of kin who completed the donation paperwork, the informant listed on the paperwork (if other than the next of kin), or any legal entities involved with the death certificate process (local registrars, medical certifiers etc). If STAFS is contacted by anyone other than the before mentioned individuals/entities, STAFS will not release any identifiable information and will contact the next of kin to inform them.

How should I notify STAFS of changes to my contact information?

You will need to complete the Change of Information form located on our website at www.shsu.edu/stafs. You can also obtain this form by contacting us at stafs@shsu.edu.

Can I hold a memorial service and/or viewing before donating to STAFS?

STAFS holds a memorial service every November for the families that have donated a loved one the year prior. Regardless, families can also still hold their own memorial service or viewing before donating to STAFS if desired. However, please note that STAFS cannot always accept embalmed individuals, and often have time-since-death requirements for acceptance. You will also need to coordinate with STAFS about timing of this service to ensure it won’t affect acceptance.

Can I visit my loved one at STAFS?

Unfortunately, STAFS does not have the capability of providing viewing services and does not permit families to access the facility. However, STAFS does provide the next of kin with a fingerprint(s) keepsake in honor of their donation, and will invite the next of kin, as well as their family/friends, to attend the memorial service held the following year.

Please feel free to contact us at 936-294-2310 or stafs@shsu.edu with any additional questions or concerns you may have about donating to STAFS. Please also feel free to visit our website at www.shsu.edu/stafs for more information.

We would love to hear from you! Please feel free to visit our website at www.shsu.edu/stafs to submit your story on why you chose to give the ultimate gift.