

Making the Right Choice When Picking a Tissue Partner

The extraordinary gift of tissue donation is made possible by an ecosystem of cooperation within a community: hospitals, tissue recovery agencies, hospices, funeral homes, law enforcement, coroners, medical examiners, first responders – and most importantly, individuals.

Hospitals play a critical role in this process, considering how many patients they support both as tissue recipients and donors. While any partnership between a hospital or health system and a tissue partner should be applauded, there are a wide variety of services tissue partners do – and don't – provide. There are many differences between a full-service tissue bank, which offers a complete range of services that facilitate the gift of donation, compared to tissue recovery agencies, which rely on secondary processors. Hospitals should consider all these factors when it's time to choose a partner.

Here is a breakdown of the key steps in the tissue donation process.

Referrals

As a first step, tissue recovery partners must evaluate each potential referral for donor suitability. For tissue recovery agencies, this can be an involved process, as they may work with many different partners depending on the types of tissue involved. Referrals can be significantly streamlined when working with a full-service tissue bank, such as LifeNet Health, with direct ownership over the process.

Recovery

Hospitals should ensure that a prospective tissue partner has quick and nimble recovery teams – ideally 24/7 – located in areas throughout the region, with well-defined response protocols and criteria to minimize delays. Another feature to look for is an organization with highly trained anatomists to aid in the recovery process. LifeNet Health offers anatomists across all service regions.

Reconstruction

While every tissue partner should meet the American Association of Tissue Banks' required criteria for reconstruction, there are ways to go above and beyond – such as using Biobone, a biodegradable prosthetic that supports burial and cremation funeral plans. A strong, policy-based reconstruction program also indicates a higher level of respect for the dignity of each donor. Families are often looking for these types of assurances, which support open-casket viewing. Solid reconstruction practices also support funeral home partners within your communities by simplifying their preparation of the donor for burial.



Distribution

The manner that gifts are returned to the communities that need them is of utmost importance. Priorities include looking for partners who process tissue within your region and can prioritize “just-in-time delivery” for emergent cases, further supporting surgical teams and patient needs.

Supporting Families

The tissue donation process does not end once the tissue has been successfully transplanted. Tissue partners are in a privileged position to support grieving families as they seek hope in times of tragedy. Choosing a partner that prioritizes support during the healing process after the loss of a loved one should be an important consideration. LifeNet Health, for example, provides support for 30 months after donation.

Communication with families and others after their loved one becomes a donor is also important. A full-service tissue bank like LifeNet Health can report back to partners and the donor’s families on how their loved one’s gifts changed lives. They can share the number of tissues donated, types of tissue recovered and where they have been transplanted through their Thanks2You program. Tissue recovery agencies are unable to track these precious gifts from donation to transplantation.

As the only full-service tissue bank in the Pacific Northwest, Florida, and Virginia that recovers, processes, and distributes the gifts of donated tissue, LifeNet Health fulfills each of the needs mentioned above, offering an unprecedented level of support and expertise. In fact, LifeNet Health partners with 1000+ hospital and community partners across the country to fulfill final wishes and bring hope and healing to others. Hospital leaders and community partners can have comfort knowing that LifeNet Health is a nonprofit organization focused on saving lives, restoring health, and giving hope.

Whether you choose to partner with LifeNet Health or another organization, we hope you will consider all the factors that can play into this important decision – and thank you for doing your part in making the gift of donation a reality!