



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Friday, April 19, 2002
MSG 2002-032

MEMORANDUM FOR: Heads Of Executive Departments And Agencies

FROM: Kay Coles James, Director

Subject: National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week, 2002

April 21-27, 2002, has been designated as the week honoring organ and tissue donors. On this occasion, communities across our nation join in celebrating the critical importance of organ and tissue donors and their ability to save and enhance lives.

In 1983, Congress first designated the third full week in April as [National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week](#) to raise awareness of the critical need for organ and tissue donation and to encourage all Americans to share their decision concerning donation with their families. Again in 2002, we should celebrate this week by acknowledging the extraordinary generosity of gifts given by living and deceased donors. I encourage you to communicate with your employees, asking that they take time to learn about the process and, together with their families, make a decision about donating.

Unfortunately, many people are not able to reap the benefits of remarkable transplant technology. Today, more than 79,000 men, women, and children wait for an organ transplant; without an increase in donation, that number will continue to escalate. Every day, 16 people die for lack of organs available for transplant, and 114 individuals are added to the national waiting list for organs.

I have seen what can be accomplished when the federal community becomes aware of a need. Time and again, federal employees have proven their compassion and generosity through record-setting charitable contributions, volunteer activities and sometimes through great personal sacrifice.

That is why I'm asking each of you to communicate to your employees the importance of this week. Participating in [National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week](#) can be as simple as learning the facts about organ and tissue donation or seeking out an organization sponsoring some activity that supports donation.

EXISTING FLEXIBILITIES:

- Federal employees may use up to 30 days of paid leave each calendar year to serve as an organ donor. Employees may use up to an additional 7 days of paid leave each calendar year to serve as a bone-marrow donor. Leave for bone marrow and organ donation is a separate category of leave that is in addition to annual and sick leave.
- The length of absence for organ donation procedures will vary depending upon the medical circumstances of each case. For medical procedures and recuperation requiring absences longer than 30 days, we encourage agencies to continue to accommodate employees by granting additional time off in the form of sick and/or annual leave, advanced sick and/or annual leave, donated annual leave from the agency's leave transfer or leave bank programs, or leave without pay.
- Federal employees are fortunate to have access to some of the best health coverage in our country. The Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB) offers coverage for a number of types of transplants. Employees and retirees should check with their individual health plans if they have questions about transplants.

This effort needs our support. Through your efforts to encourage employees to educate themselves about making a donation and to make their decision, I am sure that we will help more federal employees bring hope to those in desperate need of life-saving assistance.

We have provided information on leave for bone marrow and organ donation on our fact sheet, which is available at opm.gov/oca/leave/html/donor.htm. Questions on leave policies should be directed to OPM's Pay and Leave Administration Division on (202) 606-2858 or by email at payleave@opm.gov.