Check your vocabulary

Language plays an important role in the misconceptions and fears about organ, eye, and tissue donation. When talking about donation, it is important to consider how the general public may perceive certain language. Avoiding certain terminology that may cause concern will help further understanding about donation, and will also improve overall acceptance of the donation process. Please be cautious of the following terminology when you discuss donation in your community.

Please use:

"Recover" organs	Instead of "Harvesting"

"Harvest" is a word that has long been used by the medical community. However, the word "harvest" is often associated with crops, crows, and combines. It can be quite unpalatable, especially to donor families when associated with their loved ones's organs. The word "recovery" helps people understand that removal of a loved one's organs and tissues for transplant is a respectable surgical procedure.

"Deceased Donor" or "Deceased Donation"	Instead of "Cadaver" or "Cadaveric"

In the past, the term donor did not require any specificity. Today as more people choose to become living donors, there is a need to distinguish between living and deceased donors. Reportedly, the term cadaveric depersonalizes the fact that a gift was offered to someone upong an individual's death. The word cadaver is defined as "dead bodies intended for dissection." This does not display the honor and respect we give to all individuals who have couragously chosen to give the gift of life.

"Ventilated Support"	Instead of "Life Support"

There are two ways to determine death: cardiac death (when the heart stops functioning) and brain death (when the brain stops functioning). The term "life support" proves to be a confusing term when used in conjunction with brain death. When death occurs, there is no support that can make the individual live again. The terms "mechanical" or "ventilated support" are appropriate for the support given to a deceased person in the event of organ, eye, and tissue donation.