

The Intersection of Medical Assistance in Dying and Social Work Practice

In June 2016, Parliament amended the *Criminal Code* to create exemptions from the offences of culpable homicide, aiding suicide, and administering a noxious thing, in order to permit medical practitioners and nurse practitioners to provide medical assistance in dying (“MAiD”). The amendment permits social workers to assist in the process. However, the role of the social worker in this context remains unclear and has left many professional social workers uncertain as to how their practice may be affected by the new MAiD law.

The objectives of this research are to identify the role of social workers within the context of MAiD services and to clarify professional boundaries and responsibilities when practicing within MAiD. A liability assessment will be conducted once the professional responsibilities of social workers are identified.

A doctrinal research methodology will be used to understand the eligibility requirements and safeguards of the MAiD legislation and assess how this interacts with the professional responsibilities of registered social workers.

Front line social workers will need guidance and support on developing and following best practices while working within the MAiD context. They will also require advice on the possible liability arising from practicing within the context of MAiD.

The intersection between law and social work practice cannot be minimized. Healthcare institutions and community healthcare programs are currently developing ways to facilitate MAiD. This research will assist administrators and direct service providers in understanding the role of the social worker as well as the potential liability arising from practicing within this context.