

End of Life Doulas and Aged Residential Care

Supporting residents, whānau and care teams through the end of life alongside clinical care

When a resident is approaching the end of life

Residents and whānau may be navigating:

- uncertainty about what to expect
- changing needs as death approaches
- difficult conversations and decisions
- family dynamics and communication
- questions about what matters most to the resident
- preparing for death and dying
- cultural, spiritual and emotional needs
- saying goodbye and after-death care

What Is an End of Life Doula?

An End of Life Doula is a non-clinical companion providing time-rich emotional, practical, spiritual and social support before, during and after death.

Support may include:

- emotional support
- practical preparation
- whānau communication
- education, navigation and reassurance

What can an End of Life Doula bring to aged residential care?

- Time and presence when staff are managing competing priorities
- Emotional and practical support for residents and whānau
- Support to explore what matters most to the person
- Facilitation of conversations around dying, death and wishes
- Vigil, bedside and whānau support before, during and after death
- Support for personalised, culturally appropriate end-of-life and after-death practices
- Legacy and meaningful end-of-life activities
- Continuity and reassurance for whānau during vulnerable times

What Doulas Do Not Do

- administer medication
 - diagnose or provide clinical care
 - give medical advice
 - direct or override clinical care plans
- Clinical concerns are referred back to the appropriate healthcare team.

Doulas do not replace clinical care.

For Care Teams

End of Life Doulas can provide additional non-clinical support when:

- a resident or whānau needs more time, presence or emotional support
- whānau are struggling or overwhelmed
- there are complex family dynamics or limited whānau support
- difficult conversations about dying or future wishes are needed
- a resident is approaching the end of life
- additional support is needed during the dying process, vigil or after death

Doulas work alongside the care team.

They complement, rather than replace, nursing, medical, palliative and allied health care. Clinical concerns remain with the appropriate healthcare professionals.

How to Connect with a Doula

Care teams may consider Doula support by:

- informing residents and whānau that End of Life Doulas are available as a non-clinical support option
- directing interested residents and whānau to ELDA to find a Professional Member
- encouraging early connection when additional emotional, practical or relational support may be helpful

Further Information

End of Life Doula Alliance Aotearoa (ELDA)

Website: www.eldaa.org.nz

Email: info@eldaa.org.nz

