

Report to the Legislature

# Bone Marrow Donation Registry Participation

December 2019

RCW 46.20.1132

Prepared by  
Division of Prevention and Community Health  
Cancer Prevention and Control Program



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## Executive Summary

The 2018 legislature passed SSB 6155 which amended existing laws to “increase awareness of the national bone marrow program statewide and to increase the number of Washington residents on the national marrow donor registry in order to increase the chance that all patients in need of bone marrow transplants will find a suitable bone marrow match.” The bill requires the Department of Licensing (DOL) to provide each driver’s license and identicard applicant with written materials and signage in their office about the registry. It also adds to the existing responsibilities of the Department of Health’s (department) bone marrow donor and recruitment program by requiring the department to work with DOL to provide their customers with bone marrow registry.

This department’s bone marrow donor recruitment program must now focus on the following areas:

- The need for bone marrow donors;
- The procedures required to become registered as a potential bone marrow donor, including procedures for determining a person's tissue type;
- The procedures a donor must undergo to donate bone marrow or other sources of blood stem cells; and
- The ability to obtain information about bone marrow donation when applying for or renewing a personal driver's license or identification card with the DOL.

The department has disseminated educational materials, information, and resources among partner agencies and their communications team leaders. DOL provided education materials, information, and resources at all places where and when driver's licenses are issued or renewed, including requests processed online. Because bone marrow matches are much more likely between people who share the same ethnicity, education efforts focused on increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of the donor pool.

As a result of efforts to increase public awareness of bone marrow donation, the department and DOL have seen a general increase in the number of people interested in learning more about bone marrow donation. This is reflected in data collected by *Be The Match*, the world’s largest and most diverse marrow registry. However, transplants facilitated by *Be The Match* have plateaued.

*Be The Match* provided a data comparison, including baseline and current numbers, about the increase in bone marrow donor registrants in Washington. Increases in interest and in the number of registrants may be attributed to the uptick in circulation of bone marrow donation education materials. However, an increase of public awareness does not adequately confirm whether current efforts have directly affected the increase in bone marrow donor registrants seen during this period.

The department and DOL will continue distribution of the materials and providing links to registration at *Be The Match*. In the future, the department will distribute materials to all priority population stakeholders among its chronic disease grants.

## Background

According to *Be The Match*, operated by the National Bone Marrow donation program, finding a match for bone marrow donation is significantly influenced by a patient's ethnic background. Because the genetic traits used to determine a match are inherited, patients are most likely to match donors who share the same ethnic background. A diverse pool of potential donors is therefore imperative to ensure that patients are able to find marrow to treat their serious illnesses.

In recognition of this, the Legislature passed Substitute Senate Bill 6155 in 2018. The legislation created §1132 within RCW 46.20 to require the Department of Licensing (DOL) to provide applicants for driver's licenses and identification cards with information about bone marrow donation, as well as to post signs with registry information at DOL locations. The law also amended RCW 70.54.280 to require the Department of Health (department) to educate members of the public about how to learn more about becoming bone marrow donors when applying for driver's licenses and identification cards at DOL locations. The legislation also required the department and DOL to report on the effects of these efforts on bone marrow donation registration numbers in the state.

## Discussion

The department and DOL have worked together to provide educational materials and information about bone marrow donation to all residents in Washington state who have an interface with the DOL.

The department provided education materials, information, and resources to partner agencies and their communications team leaders. Articles promoting bone marrow donation were included in two Comprehensive Cancer Control newsletters, which reach over 300 community-based organizations across the state. These organizations are primarily members of the Washington Community Action, Research, and Evidence-based Systems (CARES) About Cancer Partnership. The partnership includes health care facilities and cancer centers, non-profit organizations, universities, tribal organizations, and local health agencies.

DOL provides each in-person driver license or identification card applicant with written materials about donating bone marrow by joining the bone marrow registry (see graphic 1.1). This is done at the completion of the licensing transaction. Overall from June 2018 through June 2019, DOL issued 348,594 original and transfer driver licenses and renewed 891,560 driver licenses. Posters are also placed in all driver license offices promoting the program to help raise awareness about the need for donors (see graphic 1.2). For those customers who conduct their business through mail, DOL delivers printed information provided by the department about the importance of bone marrow donation and how to join the national bone marrow registry.

One can register to become a bone marrow donor through *Be the Match* either online at <https://bethematch.org/support-the-cause/donate-bone-marrow/> or at in-person donor registry drives. Potential donors must be between the ages of 18 and 60 years, be willing to donate to anyone in need, and meet certain health guidelines. The guidelines are available at: <https://bethematch.org/support-the-cause/donate-bone-marrow/join-the-marrow-registry/medical-guidelines/>.

One year before the passage of (2018) SSB 6155, *Be The Match* reported a total of 15,920 total Washington state registrants in its database. In the year since that legislation went into effect, the number of registrants increased by 352 for a total of 16,272. The racial-ethnic breakdown of registrants is as follows: 80 American Indian and Alaska Native, 931 Asian, 275 Black or African American, 1665 Hispanic-Latino, and 2563 identified as multiple races/ethnicities. See Table 1 for a breakdown of new bone marrow donation registrations based on whether registration occurred online or at an in person recruitment event. See Table 2 for the racial-ethnic breakdown of bone marrow donation registrations pre-and post-legislation.

**Table 1: Total Number of New Bone Marrow Donation Registrants from Washington June 2018 – June 2019**

	Online Registration	In-Person Registration	Total
<b>Pre Legislation</b>	7,555	8,355	15,920
<b>Post Legislation</b>	14,063	2,209	16,272

*Data Provided and Analysed by Be the Match data specialists.*

**Table 2: Total Number of New Bone Marrow Donation Registrants by Race and Ethnicity from Washington June 2018 – June 2019**

	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic Latino	Multiple Races/Ethnicities	Total
<b>Only Pre Legislation</b>	64	3324	406	860	1730	6384
<b>Only Post Legislation</b>	80	931	275	1665	2563	5514

*Data Provided and Analysed by Be the Match data specialists.*

These data suggest that more potential donors have been made aware of the bone marrow donor registry.

Graphic 1.1 Flyer given to in-person and online DOL customers for both new and renewals licenses

**For blood cancer patients there is a cure. And the amazing thing is it could be you.**

Join the Be The Match Registry<sup>®</sup> **and help save lives.**

[Join.BeTheMatch.org/WA](http://Join.BeTheMatch.org/WA)

NATIONAL MARROW DONOR PROGRAM **BE THE MATCH<sup>®</sup>** (800) MARROW-2

**You could be the one to save a life.**

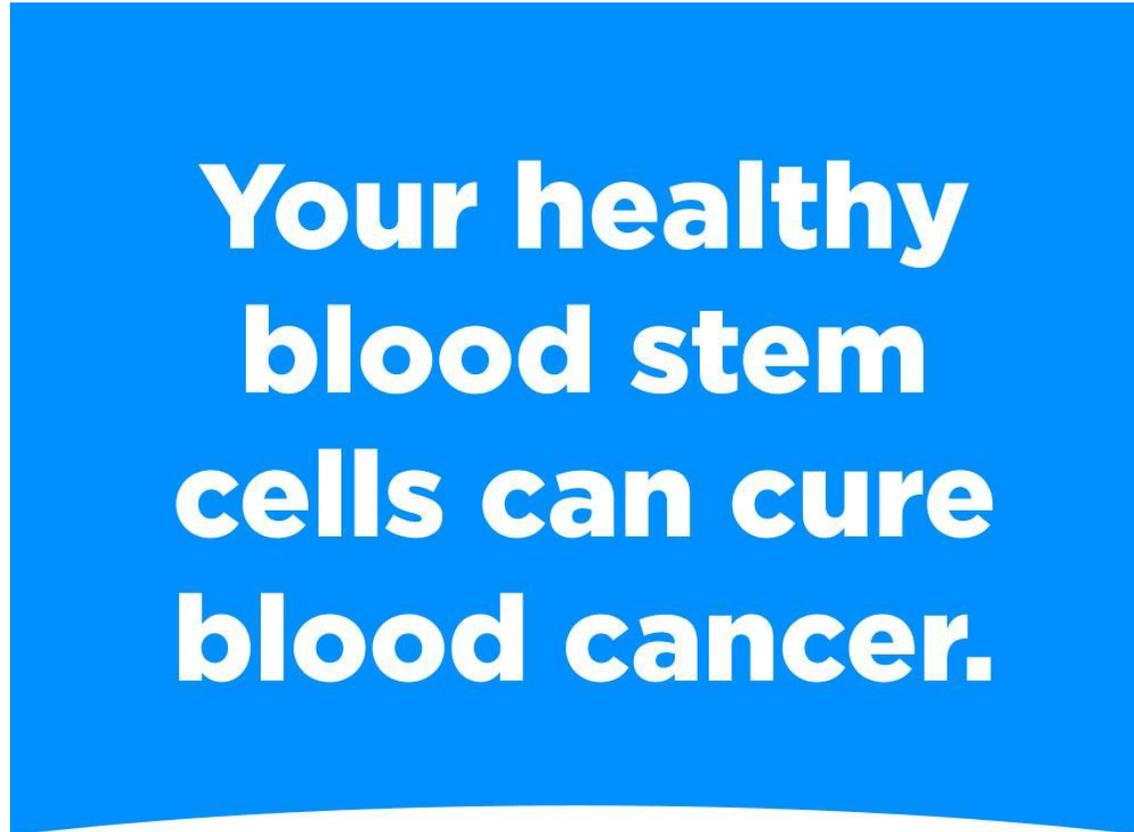
Join the Be The Match Registry and become part of every patient's search for a perfectly matched donor. Thousands of patients with blood cancers like leukemia and lymphoma, and blood diseases like sickle cell, need a marrow or stem cell transplant to survive. For more than 30 years, Be The Match has been saving lives. **Join us.**

- 1 REGISTER ONLINE
- 2 RECEIVE & RETURN CHEEK SWAB KIT
- 3 BE READY IF CALLED AS A MATCH

NATIONAL MARROW DONOR PROGRAM **BE THE MATCH<sup>®</sup>** [Join.BeTheMatch.org/WA](http://Join.BeTheMatch.org/WA) (800) MARROW-2

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Graphic 1.2 Poster example provided in all Department of Licensing offices



Join the  
Be The Match Registry®  
**and help save lives.**

[Join.BeTheMatch.org/WA](https://Join.BeTheMatch.org/WA)



(800) MARROW-2

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## Recommendations

The department and DOL will continue to distribute *Be The Match* materials. In the future, using chronic disease grants, the department will expand the distribution of its materials to priority populations. While the number of registered bone marrow donors from Washington increased, the department cannot determine how much of this was due to the increased educational efforts. Other groups hosted in-person donor recruitment events and may be also driving people to the *Be The Match* website. If the Legislature desires that DOL and/or the department further develop technical assistance, promotion, or media campaigns or evaluation efforts, the department and DOL would require increased staff support and financial resources.

## Conclusion

Through the combined work with the department and DOL, Washington has been able to make significant progress toward increasing the number of bone marrow donors in the state. The number of newly registered residents has decreased in racial/ethnic diversity. More work can be done to engage and identify potential new registrants in diverse racial/ethnic communities. The number of registrants who listed themselves as belonging to multiple racial/ethnic groups has increased. This is critical, since *Be The Match* reports that because genetic type is used to match donors and patients, which is much more complex than matching blood type, the likelihood of finding a match for a patient in need of a transplant ranges from 23 to 77 percent depending on a patient's ethnic background. Providing educational materials to Washington's residents may have made an impact in this area, and may have increased the number of registrants from Washington who signed up as potential donors.

## Appendix A: RCW 46.20.1132

### **Information for bone marrow donation—Registry—Organizations and third parties may not utilize information obtained for fund-raising or other commercial purposes.**

(1) The department shall provide each driver's license or identicard applicant with written materials regarding making a donation of bone marrow and being placed on the bone marrow donor registry at the completion of their licensing transaction.

(2) The department of licensing, in cooperation with the national marrow donor program and other appropriate organizations, shall place signage in each of the licensing service offices that provide background on the written materials that the applicant will receive regarding bone marrow donation. This will include a notice that any information provided by the driver's license or identicard applicant will be used solely for allowing the applicant to obtain information on becoming a possible bone marrow donor and will not be used for commercial or fund-raising purposes.

(3) No organization or third party may utilize the information obtained from this section for fund-raising or other commercial purposes.

