

CONTACT:
Marissa Walker
Program Manager, Marketing & Communications
214-443-3327 or 972-999-5848
mwalker@organ.org



Southwest Transplant Alliance Outpaces the Trump Administration's New Guidelines to Save More Lives Through Organ Donation

DALLAS, February 13, 2020 – In the wake of the Trump Administration's new regulations for organ procurement organizations, Dallas-based Southwest Transplant Alliance (STA) is ready to meet and exceed Washington's expectations. Organ procurement is a highly-regulated industry with countless barriers to success including accountability to multiple regulatory agencies. STA has surpassed the proposed federal guidelines, ranking it among the nation's top performing organ procurement organizations (OPOs). STA is one of the 58 federally designated nonprofits that helps bridge the divide between those who give life in death by donating their organs to those awaiting a life-saving organ transplant.

In an online statement, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar said, "We announced proposals that have the potential to transform the lives of thousands of Americans in need of organ transplants. CMS is proposing to reform how we measure the work of organ procurement organizations by holding them accountable to objective, consistent criteria. These reforms have the potential to give tens of thousands of Americans a chance at a better, longer healthier life."

The nation's OPOs are under the lens of the Trump Administration following an executive order issued in 2019. The [Executive Order on Advancing American Kidney Health](#) promised new guidelines and standards to help measure and monitor the federally designated non-profit agencies responsible for organ procurement across the United States. President and Chief Executive Officer of STA Patti Niles has been a leader in the organ procurement field and an active participant in the development of the new guidelines.

"Working shoulder to shoulder with Secretary Azar and providing input on the new guidelines has been a career highlight," said Niles. "As the Trump Administration implements these new performance metrics for OPOs, I'm proud of the standards we have set for ourselves. STA will continue to outpace itself year over year with a commitment to innovation, growth and service to our community. I'm proud that our organization is ready for this change."

STA is well-positioned for the future as it currently surpasses the proposed metrics and measurements put forth by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS). Over the past decade, STA has onboarded industry-leading professionals committed to taking the agency to the next level. Niles has taken her expertise in organ recovery and passion for innovation to drive the organization forward. As an industry veteran, Niles believes that OPOs are critical to creating progress in organ recovery, which can lead to better outcomes for transplant recipients.

2019: A record year

With a decade of continuous growth, 2019 brought another record-breaking year for STA. This was due in large part to organizational shifts that focused on considering every possible gift and implementing innovative approaches to save as many lives as possible.

Highlights include:

- 428 organ donors were able to give life to those awaiting a life-saving organ.
- 1,308 organs were transplanted.
- The agency also set a new benchmark for success with the highest number of lungs, livers and kidneys recovered in a single year.
- STA opened its own lab to ensure that it can maintain oversight of tests that are performed to ensure donors and recipient organs match and will result in the best possible outcome.
- STA laid the foundation for the future with ongoing construction of its [state-of-the-art organ recovery center](#) set to open later this year.
- The organization implemented [award-winning artificial intelligence](#) to help drive a more efficient process for donor cases.

While the organization's successes are key for fulfilling its lifesaving mission, there are still not enough organs available for transplant to meet the need nationally. Currently, more than 112,000 people in the United States, including 10,000 in Texas, are awaiting a lifesaving organ transplant. Industry-wide innovation and improvements are key to addressing the need, but the public plays a key role as well.

Individuals who wish to leave a legacy through organ, eye and tissue donation or contribute to this life-saving work are encouraged to register through Donate Life Texas, share their decision with their family, and visit www.organ.org for more information.

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About Southwest Transplant Alliance

Southwest Transplant Alliance is a nonprofit organization that serves as the bridge between those who make the decision to donate their organs and tissues to those awaiting a lifesaving transplant. Founded in 1974, STA has facilitated more than 30,000 organs for recovery and enhanced the lives of tens of thousands of people through tissue recovery.

STA is among the largest of 58 federally designated, nonprofit organ procurement organizations (OPOs) in the United States, is a member of the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) and is accredited by the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations (AOPO). The organization serves communities in North Texas, Beaumont, Bryan/College Station, Corpus Christi, El Paso, Galveston, Midland/Odessa, Temple, Tyler and Wichita Falls. For more information, go to www.organ.org.