Human Body Preservation, Museum Exhibition & Scientific Donation

A guide to documented options for Americans | November 2026

Scope: organizations with publicly documented donation or preservation arrangements. This is a researched selection across the major categories, not a complete registry of every U.S. medical school. “Accepting applications” does not guarantee acceptance of remains at death. Public exhibition is rare and must be separately approved.

“Make me a dinosaur!”



Quick comparison

Goal	Best leads	Important limitation
Public museum collection	Mütter Museum	Selective acquisition; display not promised
Plastinated whole body	BODY WORLDS / Institute for Plastination	New registrations suspended indefinitely
Permanent skeletal research collection	UT Knoxville; Texas State; Colorado Mesa; WCU; USF	Research collections, not public exhibits
Medical teaching donation	Dartmouth; UVM; Rochester; Duke; Arizona; Mayo	Typically temporary use and disposition afterward
Non-transplant medical research	Science Care; MedCure	Eligibility and state limits; no display
Long-term low-temperature	Alcor; Cryonics Institute	Paid cryonics, not museum

1. Public anatomical exhibition and museums

Mütter Museum — Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Museum may consider remains offered directly by a living donor or via bequest, under its August 2025 policy. Acquisitions are limited, can be declined, and public display is not guaranteed.

Official information: https://muttermuseum.org/mutter-matters/

BODY WORLDS / Institute for Plastination — Germany; exhibitions in the U.S.

Its body donation program has historically included donors from the Americas and produces plastinated educational specimens. Official FAQ states new applications are indefinitely suspended due to capacity.

Official information: https://bodyworlds.com/about/faq/

2. Forensic anthropology and long-term skeletal collections

University of Tennessee Forensic Anthropology Center — Knoxville, TN

Accepts donor paperwork; donated bodies enter the Anthropology Research Facility and subsequently the donated skeletal collection. Capacity and medical exclusions apply; funeral-home/death-certificate costs may fall on family.

Official information: https://fac.utk.edu/body-donation/

Texas State University Forensic Anthropology Center — San Marcos, TX

Whole-body forensic research donation with living-donor forms. Outside roughly 100 miles of San Marcos, transport arrangements and costs generally fall to donor/family.

Official information: https://www.txst.edu/anthropology/facts/donations/body.html

Colorado Mesa University Forensic Investigation Research Station — Grand Junction, CO

Offers living-donor paperwork. After research, skeletal remains are curated in a collection and not returned to family. Transport beyond 75 miles is the donor/family responsibility.

Official information: https://www.coloradomesa.edu/forensic-investigation-research-station/donations.html

Western Carolina University FOREST — Cullowhee, NC

Accepts willed-body applications. Following decomposition research, remains are placed in the John A. Williams Human Skeletal Collection for study; not a public exhibit.

Official information: https://www.wcu.edu/learn/departments-schools-colleges/cas/social-sciences/anthsoc/foranth/FANTbodydonation.aspx

Sam Houston State University STAFS — Huntsville, TX

Has a forensic willed-body donation program with living donor forms and an inquiry contact: stafs@shsu.edu; 936-294-2310.

Official information: https://www.shsu.edu/academics/colleges/criminal-justice/stafs/willed-body-program

University of South Florida USF-FORT — Florida

Florida Institute for Forensic Anthropology & Applied Science accepts inquiries for donation to outdoor research and a permanent donated skeletal collection. Contact: nswise@usf.edu.

Official information: https://www.usf.edu/arts-sciences/institutes/ifaas/research/

3. Medical-school anatomical gifts

Dartmouth Geisel School of Medicine — Hanover, NH

Advance registration only; donor must be at least 21 and reside and die in NH or VT. Medical education, not public display. 603-650-1636; Anatomical.Gifts.Program@dartmouth.edu.

Official information: https://geiselmed.dartmouth.edu/anatomical-gifts-program/

University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine — Burlington, VT

Anatomical Gift Program; age 18+ and advance registration strongly important. Request forms: 802-656-4605; agp@med.uvm.edu.

Official information: https://www.uvm.edu/larnermed/anatomical-gifts

University of Rochester — Rochester, NY

Whole-body anatomical education; certain conditions may exclude donation and receipt generally must be within 24 hours of death.

Official information: https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/anatomical-gift/donations

Duke University School of Medicine — Durham, NC

Anatomical Gifts Program for education of healthcare professionals; not a disease-specific research program or public exhibition.

Official information: https://medschool.duke.edu/about-us/anatomical-gifts-program/overview-and-procedure-anatomical-body-donation

University of Arizona Willed Body Program — Tucson, AZ

Whole-body donations for medical training and education, primarily serving Arizona residents.

Official information: https://bodydonation.med.arizona.edu/

Mayo Clinic Body Donation Program — Rochester, MN

Requires donor preregistration; program is on Minnesota campus only. Studies typically last 6–15 months; disposition options follow.

Official information: https://www.mayoclinic.org/body-donation/making-donation

4. Independent whole-body medical research organizations

Science Care — multistate

Non-transplant anatomical donations for education/research; no-cost services if accepted. Its current FAQ excludes AK, AR, HI, ME, MN, MT, NJ, NM, ND, and OK. Registration does not guarantee acceptance.

Official information: https://www.sciencecare.com/resources/faq-whole-body-donation-science-care

MedCure — most U.S. states

Accepts prospective donor registrations and screens at death; medical, geographic, and other exclusions apply. No public exhibition promise.

Official information: https://medcure.org/body-donation/faqs/

5. Paid long-term preservation (not donation to an exhibit)

Cryonics Institute — Clinton Township, MI

Whole-body cryopreservation is offered through paid arrangements; published prices start at $28,000 for lifetime members, excluding local assistance and other costs. No demonstrated method exists to revive cryopreserved humans.

Official information: https://cryonics.org/membership/

Alcor Life Extension Foundation — Scottsdale, AZ

Membership and funded agreements for whole-body or brain-focused cryopreservation. This is speculative long-term storage, not anatomical museum exhibition or proven future resuscitation.

Official information: https://www.alcor.org/membership/

6. Resin / amber-like preservation

Plastination uses polymers to replace bodily fluids and fat, producing durable anatomical specimens. It is not the same as casting an intact body inside a solid block of clear amber resin. No verified U.S. program was identified here that publicly offers whole-body transparent resin encasement as a routine end-of-life service. Ask any provider about legal authority, embalming, technical feasibility, structural stability, transport, storage, and final disposition before relying on a proposal.

7. Planning and questions to ask

- Does the program accept living-donor registration from my state, and is it currently enrolling?
- Will the whole body be retained, plastinated, skeletonized, cremated, or returned?
- Is public exhibition possible, and can that promise be written into an agreement?
- Who pays for transportation, permits, preparation, and long-term care?
- What conditions, autopsy, organ donation, or death location could prevent acceptance?
- Who must authorize the gift, and what happens if relatives object?
- Can the institution transfer, deaccession, or dispose of remains later?
- What is the backup plan if the institution cannot accept the donation?

Practical next step: Contact the Mütter Museum first for the possibility of museum accession; contact forensic collections if lasting scientific stewardship matters more than public viewing. Arrange a backup disposition plan and consult a funeral director or estate attorney about state-specific requirements.

Research note: Information reflects official institutional pages reviewed November 2026. Availability, policy, prices and eligibility can change. Links above serve as the source directory.