

# The Right to Try: How the Federal Government Prevents Americans from Getting the Life-Saving Treatments They Need

Darcy Olsen

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Why should you need the government's permission to save your own life?

Jenn McNary's two sons, Max and Austin, were diagnosed with Duchenne muscular dystrophy—a fatal disorder that leads to muscle degeneration and eventually death. In a cruel and unnecessary twist, Max received access to a clinical trial; Austin didn't. As a result, Max was able to get out of his wheelchair and play on his school soccer team while Austin continued to deteriorate until he could not even feed himself.

The FDA takes as long as fifteen years to approve a new drug, demanding near-absolute proof of effectiveness before allowing commercial distribution. But this ignores the urgent plight of millions of terminally ill Americans who have run out of approved options—and are running out of time. These patients are not looking for a 100 percent guarantee that a treatment will work for them. They are looking for a fighting chance.

Why can't they have that chance? Why don't they have the right to try . . . the right to save their own lives?

Author and activist Darcy Olsen, president of the Goldwater Institute, tells the remarkable story behind the Right to Try movement, the national campaign to give dying Americans access to cutting-edge treatments that are under study but still years away from receiving the FDA's green light. The men, women, and children featured in these pages are our own family members, friends, and neighbors. Their heartbreaking, triumphant, and inspirational stories prove the necessity for Right to Try laws. Because everyone deserves the Right to Try.



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