

Assets and Personal Protection

Advanced Directives

Medical emergencies can happen unexpectedly. During these times, it may be difficult to make the best decisions about how your care should be cared for. Help your loved one clearly and formally communicate their end-of-life wishes.

Advance Directives ([National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization- NHPCO](#))

Definition

Advance directive: legal documents that enable you to plan for and communicate your end-of-life wishes if you are unable to communicate, a living will, and healthcare power of attorney.

Selecting a Healthcare Agent

A healthcare agent (surrogate or proxy) is someone you designate to make medical decisions for you if, at some future time, you are unable to make decisions yourself. He/she:

- Knows you well
- Is calm in a crisis
- Understands how you would make the decision if you were able
- Is not afraid to ask questions and advocate to doctors
- Can reassure and communicate with your family

Questions to help you talk with the healthcare agent:

- What treatments do you want to receive or refuse?
- What are you afraid might happen if you cannot make decisions for yourself?
- Do you have any fears or concerns about the medical treatments that you might receive? What are your views about artificial nutrition (food) and hydration (fluid)?
- If your heart stopped, under what circumstances would you want doctors to use CPR to try to resuscitate you?
- Would you want to receive treatments such as mechanical ventilation, antibiotics, or tube feeding for a time, but have them stopped if there was no improvement in your condition?

Preparing the Advance Directive

- You do not need a lawyer to prepare advance directives.
- Make sure you prepare your advance directive to accurately reflect your decisions.
- Make your physician and loved ones aware of your specific requests so appropriate referrals and arrangements can be made.
- Ask someone else to look over the documents for accuracy.

Examples of State's Advance Directive ([NHPCO](#))

Resources

[American Medical Association](#)

[Medicare](#)

[Mayoclinic](#)

[Medline Plus](#)

[National Institute on Aging](#)