

Power of Attorney and Advance Directives

older couple looking at paperwork

You have the right to make decisions now regarding your own health care in the future.

What is Advance Care Planning?

Advance Care Planning is a process for helping you understand possible future health care choices. Reflect on your own values and goals and discuss your choices with those persons closest to you. You may also put your wishes in writing in case you become unable to make your own decisions in the future.

YOUR healthcare and end of life decisions may be the most important choices facing you in the future. People are better prepared to make difficult end-of-life decisions if they understand their overall healthcare status. Ask questions of your physician(s) about your health.

YOU should decide about the kind of care you want while you are able to make your own decisions.

THINK about what you would want done for you.

TALK with your family and friends about your health care and end-of-life decision making. Advance care planning is all about making choices for yourself and communicating with family and friends about end-of-life care.

ACT Complete the forms (linked below) and share with your family, physician, health care agent and attorney.

Nine issues to discuss with your family and friends

1. Beliefs
2. Health conditions
3. Life sustaining treatments
4. Vision of dying and death
5. Organ and tissue donation desired
6. Funeral arrangements
7. Documentation of wishes
8. Advance Directives and your treatment choices
9. Spokesperson(s)/agent(s) you have chosen

When decisions have to be made for your health care in the future, prior conversations will help to convey your attitudes and values so your agents will know what treatment decisions they should make.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a durable power of attorney for healthcare?

The Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare (DPOA-HC) is a document allowing you to name a healthcare agent to make healthcare decisions for you only when you cannot make decisions for yourself. Your healthcare agent may consult with your caregivers and decide on a plan for your care. Your agent must tell caregivers what you would and would not choose as certain treatments.

[The fillable document is available here.](#)

Who is a healthcare agent?

The healthcare agent can be a family member or friend, a person you trust who knows your religious and other values and who is willing to make healthcare choices for you. Make sure your healthcare agent knows how you feel about quality-of-life choices, hospitalization, hospice, experimental treatments or life sustaining treatments. Your healthcare agent must follow your wishes. Your care-givers must respect the choices your healthcare agent makes for you.

How is the healthcare power of attorney different from a regular power of attorney?

The healthcare power of attorney covers ONLY healthcare. The regular Power of Attorney covers financial matters and property decisions. You may choose the same agent for all your affairs, but it is important to use a separate document/directive for healthcare because your doctor, hospital and others will need copies.

How do I start the discussion about end-of-life and advance directives?

Talking about these issues may not be easy; there may be resistance, even denial. Many people are uncomfortable talking about living at the end-of-life. Start the conversation by telling your loved ones this is important to you. Eventually we are all going to die.

You have been thinking about the kinds of treatment you would want and want to share your thoughts with them. If loved ones have to make decisions for you it may be difficult, but discussing your choices now can help them.

Help for You to Prepare the Forms

[The Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare document is available here.](#)

Prepare a [Living Will.](#)

Review a [Do Not Resuscitate \(DNR\) order.](#)

Last updated on December 29, 2025.

Topics

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