

An Overview: Advance Care Planning Cornerstones

A. Advance Care Planning

Advance Care Planning is a way to let people know what kind of care you would want in the event you became seriously ill, were incapacitated, or at the ending of life. It is done to have something in place if you were unable to guide your own care.

Advance Care Planning (ACP) includes thinking about your personal values, what kind of care you would want, and who could speak up for you in such an event. When doing ACP it is important to decide who could be your Health Care Agent, put together your personal plans and complete an Advance Health Care Directive (Advance Directive). Even if you have no one who could be your Health Care Agent, it is still important to make your wishes known using the Advance Directive.

B. The Advance Health Care Directive (Advance Directive)

The Advance Directive is a document that:

- Has your choices about care desired when seriously ill, incapacitated or at life's end.
- Says who you want to speak with your doctor and other health care providers if you cannot speak for yourself.
- Helps guide your doctor and others about what kind of care you want.
- Gives your Health Care Agent legal standing.

There are many different forms that can be used. All require that the document be signed, dated and your signing witnessed properly to be a valid form.

C. Choosing a Health Care Agent

It is important to choose a person who can be your **Health Care Agent**. Decisions in your **Advance Health Care Directive** are carried out by your Health Care Agent. The Health Care Agent/Advocate will make decisions for you only if you cannot make your own decisions unless you say otherwise. They are to do what is needed to honor your health care wishes when you cannot direct your own care. If you have no one you trust to serve as your Health Care Agent, you can still share your other wishes using the Advance Directive. It is important to do the Advance

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Directive so that your healthcare providers and others can know and honor your wishes.

The Health Care Agent

Is someone 18 or older who knows and cares about you.

- Is willing and able to speak on your behalf.
- Is your legal spokesperson when you cannot speak for yourself.
- Knows well and understands your values and beliefs.
- Can make difficult decisions under stress.
- Will be available when needed.
- Will speak to doctors, nurses and social workers for you.
- Follows your Advance Directive.

The Health Care Agent cannot be:

- Your doctor and health care providers.
- Staff of a clinic/hospital where you get health care.
- Your group home, residential care or nursing home operator or staff where you live.
- Your LPS Conservator if you are LPS conserved.

D. Here are some other tips when doing Advance Care Planning:

1. Speak up for yourself and ask if you don't understand.
2. Get information about your illness, treatments and choices you may be asked to make in ways YOU can understand.
3. Share your plan and Advance Health Care Directive with people close to you and other important people including your health care providers. Ask your primary care team and hospital to add a copy to your medical record.
4. Make your own decisions.
5. As things change over time, make a new Personal Plan and Advance Health Care Directive if need be.

E. Staying in Control

When you finish doing your Advance Directive you have exercised your right to live your life, your way ó now, with serious illness, and at the end of life. You will be prepared. You will have a plan to share with loved ones, your doctor and other important people in your life. Make certain you give important people copies so they know and can honor your wishes when the time comes.