

What Are Advance Directives?

- ✓ Advance directives are written documents that allow you to control your medical care by specifying your preferences.
- ✓ These documents inform your family and healthcare providers about your preferences. They provide clarity about types of medical care that you would or would not want, and who you would like to make decisions for you, if needed.
- ✓ These documents will only be used if/when you are unable to communicate your preferences directly.
- ✓ In addition to completing written documents, discuss your preferences with your family and healthcare providers. Communication is the key to clarity.

Why Do I Need Advance Directives?

- ✓ All adults should have advance directives, even those who don't have a chronic health condition.
- ✓ If you wait until you're in the hospital, you may be too sick to make decisions about your treatment and your family members or your healthcare provider may have to make the decisions on your behalf.
- ✓ The goal is to ensure that your preferences are carried out, and to ensure that the important people in your life are aware of what these preferences are.

What Documents Do I Need to Complete?

- ✓ Advance directives usually take the form of one or more documents:
 - ❑ Durable Medical Power of Attorney (POA): This is also referred to as a Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare. This specifies who you want to make medical decisions for you if you are unable to do so yourself.
 - ❑ Living Will: A living will states what you do and do not want done during a medical situation in which you are not able to communicate your wishes directly (for example, whether you want to be fed through a feeding tube). Many living wills use very open statements such as "if my condition is hopeless" and you should use your POA to express your wishes more specifically.
 - ❑ Resuscitation Directive: Resuscitation refers to medical care that gets oxygen to your brain if you are unable to breathe for yourself. This includes CPR, intubation, and ventilators. In some circumstances, you may not want medical personnel to use any of these methods to keep you alive. In that case, you can create a document called a DNR (which stands for "do not resuscitate"). Note that you must give this paper to anyone who responds to a 911 call for them to not perform resuscitation. A verbal statement is not enough.
- ✓ These documents may not be recognized by states other than the one in which they were prepared. If you travel routinely or have an out-of-state procedure, make sure your documents are legally binding.

Where Do I Get the Documents I Need?

- ✓ You can get forms from your healthcare provider or local medical facility.
- ✓ One option is to have an attorney prepare the documents for you.
- ✓ The organizations listed below have further information and/or forms that you can use on their websites:
 - ❑ The American Medical Association
 - ❑ American Academy of Family Physicians
 - ❑ The American Bar Association
 - ❑ The American Cancer Society
 - ❑ AARP

What Should I Do with Completed Documents?

- ✓ Give these documents to family members, and discuss the documents with them.
- ✓ Give these documents to your healthcare team, and discuss the documents with them. These documents should become part of your medical record.
- ✓ These documents can be changed if/when your preferences change.