

Many people think they have to wait until a medical emergency, a serious diagnosis or an advanced age to put their end of life wishes in writing, but the truth is that it is wise for everyone over the age of 18 to have their care wishes defined. The best way to do this is to create an Advance Directive.

### What are the main benefits of creating an Advance Directive?

- The medical team will be taking direction from the one you trust to represent you
- Difficult care decisions won't have to be decided at the last minute, under pressure
- Family does not have to guess what treatments an individual would or would not want
- An individual can receive care that aligns with their core values and beliefs

### What is an Advance Directive?

An Advance Directive includes a Medical Power of Attorney which is a document that names someone as a Healthcare Proxy (a medical advocate) and can include a Living Will which outlines specifically what kind of care the individual does and does not want should they become unable to communicate their care wishes themselves. The Living Will specifies guidance on care including, but not limited to, dialysis and breathing machines; resuscitation; tube feeding; and organ or tissue donation after death. Note: Some states require a separate mental health directive.

### Who should be chosen as the Healthcare Proxy?

Anyone that agrees to follow the individual's care wishes and advocate well for them should they need it. This could be a spouse, child, neighbor, friend, etc. (A Healthcare Proxy is also referred to as: Agent, Healthcare Agent, Decision Maker, Representative, Surrogate, Attorney In Fact)

### Where can the correct Advance Directive form be found?

A state-specific, free version of an Advance Directive can be found at [Prepare for Your Care](#). State specific forms can also be obtained from each state's Attorney General website.

### What should be done with an Advance Directive once it's completed?

A copy of the document should be:

- Stored in a safe place with other care and estate documents
- Given to the person chosen as the Healthcare Proxy
- Provided to any family involved in the care
- Shared with the Primary Care Physician and the preferred hospital

### What if someone changes their care wishes in their Advance Directive?

Both the Advance Directives and the person named as the Healthcare Proxy can be easily updated and changed.

### What if someone doesn't have an Advance Directive?

No one is required to complete an Advance Directive. If an individual does not have an Advance Directive, the laws within the state in which they live will determine who will be chosen to make medical decisions on their behalf. Typically, this will be a spouse or child. Regardless of their choice, the quality of care will not be affected, but the kind of care provided may or may not match their wishes since those may be unknown. Note: State laws may vary.