

# Advanced Care Planning

What kind of medical care would you want if you were too ill or hurt to express your wishes?

Advance directives are legal documents that allow you to convey your decisions about end-of-life care to friends and health care professionals, and to avoid confusion later on. They are an important piece of the personal health record.

**1. LIVING WILL** – This document clearly outlines the types of medical treatments and life-sustaining measures you do and do not want for yourself in the event that you are unable to communicate your wishes.

**2. MEDICAL POWER OF ATTORNEY** – It is here that you designate someone you trust to make medical decisions on your behalf if you are unable to do so.

**3. DO NOT RESUSCITATE ORDER** – This puts into writing your wish to not be revived with cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) if your heart stops working or you stop breathing.

Having a conversation about illnesses, surgeries, or death is never easy. However, the importance of talking to loved ones about this cannot be understated. Discuss your thoughts, feelings, and wishes about your medical care and treatment periodically with those closest to you. Let others know that you are preparing advance directives for your benefit, as well as theirs. These documents will, hopefully, take much of the guesswork out of the decisions that they ultimately may have to make on your behalf.

Advance directives should always be in writing. Provide loved ones and your care providers with copies so that these documents are readily accessible when needed.

Each state has different laws pertaining to advance directives. Consult with your health care provider and a legal professional to be certain that the documents comply with all applicable laws in your state. State-specific forms may be found on the internet and at the National Hospice and Palliative Care website.

Continue talking to your loved ones and care providers about your wishes for medical care and treatment. The more they know, the better equipped they will be to make important decisions on your behalf.

Lastly, make it a point to periodically review your advance directives. It is not unusual to change perspective about medical care and treatment. Be sure that your documents reflect any changes in how you wish to be treated and cared for and that you communicate these changes to loved ones.