

# ADVANCE MEDICAL DIRECTIVES FOR MEDICAL CARE

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The purpose of this brochure is to give you information about Advance Directives. This material is given as information only. It is not intended to be a substitute for medical, legal or spiritual advice.

The information is obtained from Florida State Statute 765 (revised 1999) titled "Health Care Advance Directive" and from federal legislation titled "The Patient Self-Determination Act of 1990."

## *This Guide Covers*

- Common types of Advance Directives
- Examples of treatment choices
- How to make an Advance Directive
- What to do with a completed Advance Directive
- Changing or canceling an Advance Directive
- Help with ethical issues

## *What is an Advance Directive?*

A witnessed written or oral statement that gives instructions about your healthcare wishes when you are not able to make your own decisions. It lets your family, friends and healthcare team know your wishes to accept or refuse medical care and treatment. It protects your right to make your own choices about future medical care.

## *Health Care Surrogate*

- Any adult you choose to make healthcare decisions for you if, and only if, you can't state your wishes yourself.
- Someone who knows you well and will make decisions based on what he or she knows you would want.
- Can give informed consent, review medical records, talk to physicians, authorize transfer, apply for public healthcare benefits and consent to organ and tissue donation, according to your wishes.
- Can not authorize abortion, sterilization, psychosurgery, voluntary mental health admission or electroshock therapy.

- It is a good idea to name a second person in case your agent is not available.

## *Living Will*

- A written statement that allows you to instruct your physician to with hold or withdraw life-prolonging treatments if there is no reasonable hope of your recovery.
- Makes sure that your wishes about life-prolonging treatments are honored when you can no longer speak for yourself.
- States if you would choose to have nutrition and hydration (food and water)
- Should be discussed and shared with your physician, family, friends and clergy.
- Must be signed, dated and witnessed by two adults, one of whom is not your spouse or blood relative.

## *Be Sure Your Wishes Are Carried Out*

It is a good idea to have both a Health Care Surrogate and a Living Will.

## *Power of Attorney*

- A legal document allowing someone to act as your agent, usually for business and financial matters.
- A Power of Attorney can not make healthcare decisions unless so specified.

### *Examples of Treatment Choices*

An Advance Directive lets you make choices, in advance, about your care and treatment. Ask your doctor to explain the pros and cons of different medical treatments. Some of the choices are:

**Life Support and Extraordinary Care:** Any treatment that may prolong life but does not usually cure the injury or illness.

**Code:** Life saving action (including CPR) that tries to restart breathing or heartbeat.

**Do Not Resuscitate (DNR):** A doctor's order telling the healthcare team that you do not want CPR.

**Intravenous (IV) Therapy:** Placing a thin tube into a vein to give fluids and medications.

**Feeding Tubes:** Used for feeding if you cannot eat.

**Ventilator:** A breathing machine used when you cannot breathe.

**Dialysis:** An artificial kidney machine to remove waste products from the blood.

### *How To Make an Advance Directive*

- Talk about your wishes, feelings and values with people you trust, such as family, friends or clergy.
- Talk to your doctor about your healthcare wishes. Be sure to ask questions.
- Complete the Advance Directive forms. You may get them from your doctor, hospital, lawyer or other sources. There are many acceptable versions.

### *After Completing Your Advance Directive*

- Give copies to your doctor, family, Health Care Surrogate, etc.
- Keep a copy readily available.
- Bring a copy with you each time you come to the hospital, so that your wishes are known.

### *Changing or Cancelling Advance Directives*

- You may change or cancel your directives at any time.
- You may indicate changes in writing. Sign and date all changes.

- You may destroy the form itself.
- You may orally state your new choices to your doctor and/or surrogate.
- You may make a new Advance Directive.
- It is a good idea to review your Advance Directives yearly to be sure they still reflect your wishes.

### *What Happens Without An Advance Directive?*

Every patient has the right to make an Advance Directive. If you choose not to, you will still receive all needed treatment. If you become unable to make your own decisions, then another person will speak for you. This person is chosen in the following order:

- Your court appointed guardian, if one exists.
- Spouse
- Adult child or children
- Parent
- Sibling (adult brother or sister)
- Relative or friend

It is important to make your wishes known to family and friends because one day they may be asked to make your healthcare decisions.

### *Who Can Help With Ethical Issues and Concerns?*

The Ethics Committee is a group of healthcare professionals, clergy and others who meet to discuss ethical issues pertaining to the patient's health care needs and end of life decisions. Any doctor, patient, family member or healthcare professional may request a meeting or case review by the Ethics Committee. A request for and Ethics Committee consultation can be requested by asking the patient's nurse.

### *Advance Directives From Other States*

If you have an Advance Directive from another state, it is considered valid in Florida.

