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Advance DIRECTIVES for Health Care



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3838 N. Causeway Blvd., Suite 3350
Metairie, LA 70002
1.877.906.4133 (TTY: 711)

ADVANCE DIRECTIVE FOR HEALTH CARE

You have the right to make decisions about your medical care. An advance directive gives written instruction for your care that you make ahead of time if you are ever unable to make decisions because of illness or injury. This is the only time the advance directive is used. You should talk to your health care provider, family and loved ones about your wishes, fears and medical options.

TYPES OF ADVANCE HEALTH CARE DIRECTIVES

There are two types of advance directives: a living will and a durable power of attorney for health care.

WHAT IS A LIVING WILL?

A living will is a legal document with written instructions about any treatments you want or do not want if you are unable to speak for yourself and are terminally ill or permanently unconscious.

WHAT IS A DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR HEALTH CARE?

This is a document that allows you to name a person to make your medical decisions if you cannot make them yourself. You should choose someone you trust and know well. This person will act as your agent when treatment decisions need to be made and you cannot make them. Your agent can only make decisions about the specific treatment areas described in your power of attorney.

WHO NEEDS AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

Because illness and injury can happen at any time, all adults should consider having an advance directive, even if you are in good health now. Before you make a decision about an advance directive, speak with your family, loved ones and health care provider. You may also want to speak with a lawyer. It is your choice and right to sign an advance directive. No insurance company or health care provider can force you to sign an advance directive.

CAN I CHANGE MY ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

You can change or cancel your advance directive at any time. Be sure to destroy old advance directives. Also, tell your family, loved ones and health care provider about any new instructions. It is best to advise in writing anyone who has a copy of your advance directive of your changes.

DOES AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE CHANGE MY INSURANCE OR HEALTH CARE?

No. Your health care provider will offer the best possible medical care.

WHERE CAN I GET AN ADVANCE HEALTH CARE DIRECTIVE?

A durable power of attorney for health care and advance directive forms may be available through your health care provider or your local public library.