



Care and Choice at the End of Life

Advance Health Care Directives (AHCD)

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***This presentation is NOT medical or legal advice!**



What if you don't have a friend or relative to act as agent? Is there an agency or something that can help?

- Make your Advance Directive as clear and specific as possible with a description of what is not an acceptable living and why. Compassion & Choices Toolkit. Common Good Advance Care Planning. Village friends? Aging Life Care Association (ALCA)? Professional Fiduciary Association of California (PFAC)? End of Life doulas? Contact local hospice?

Five Wishes Advance Directive

1. Person I want to make care decisions when I can't.
2. Kind of medical treatment I want and don't want.
3. How comfortable I want to be – grooming, bathing, etc.
4. How I want people to treat me.
5. What I want my loved ones to know.

Founder was legal counsel to Mother Theresa and Missionaries of Charity.

What if I change my mind?

- Inform your agent (if you have one) and redo your Advance Directive, date it, have it witnessed or notarized and void the previous one.
- You can redo your POLST any time; have it signed by a nurse practitioner (np) or physician assistant (pa) or physician and void the previous one.

Are there other oral instructions that don't involve a written form?

- You can make a video with your cell phone or other device which can augment your Advance Directive. Your tone of voice and facial expressions may be more convincing than check boxes of yes/no on a form.
- Stan Terman, M.D, PhD. (San Francisco) has a practice of helping people do "ironclad" advance care planning including videos. (He does say "iron can rust.")

What if something happens to me and no form has been completed?

- The hospital will do all they can to keep you alive. The social worker will try to find family, neighbors, friends to get some idea as to what you would want/not want, possible bioethics committee consult, court appointed guardian. You may be discharged to an LTAC (long term acute care) facility

How often should we update our AHCD?

- Perhaps every year, or if there is any change in your circumstances, e.g. divorce, death, move, new diagnosis.
- You can update or revise your AHCD anytime.
- You can revise your POLST but it needs a physician's or np/pa's signature.

I have a living will. Do I need an AHCD?

- Maybe. In addition to a “living will” that specifies if you want or don’t want CPR, ventilator, tube feeding, etc., the AHCD also contains a “Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare” (DPAHC)– your option of appointing of someone and alternates to consent to or refuse medical care if you become incapacitated.

Are all these forms free to download or print?

- Yes. They are available on-line at several sites.
 - https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/Advanced-HealthCare-Directive-Form_031620.pdf
- California Hospital Association Advance Directive
- Prepareforyourcare.org – a simplified, easy-to-understand Advance Directive, several languages.

Can I make up my own form to use or use one form from another state?

- You can make up your own form.
- Nevada added a Dementia Directive in Oct 2019 to allow in advance Voluntarily Stopping Eating and Drinking (VSED) or to decline hand-feeding if you complete it in Nevada. End of Life Washington, End of Life Choices New York, Compassion and Choices, dementia-directive.org all have VSED addendums.

What happens if I lose the ability to make my own decisions, but later regain that ability? Who will make decisions then?

- When you regain capacity, you will make decisions – unless you specify otherwise in your AHCD.

How long is my AHCD valid?

- It's valid unless you revise it, then the revised one is the valid AHCD.

So, not everyone needs to fill out both a POLST and AHCD?

- Correct, not everyone needs to fill out both a POLST and an AHCD.
- A POLST (Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment) is usually done for persons with a limited life expectancy but can be done by anyone. It needs to be signed by a physician, np or pa.

Will the COVID-19 addendum only be valid until this pandemic is over?

- No. The Compassion and Choices COVID-19 addendum pertains to COVID-19 anytime. It allows you to indicate your preferences for trying care at home, intubation, if placed on a ventilator, for how long, tube feeding, dialysis, CPR.

Does everyone need a Sectarian Healthcare Directive?

- The Compassion and Choices Sectarian Healthcare Directive is an Advance Directive addendum that expresses that your wishes superseded a religious institution's policies and that you wish to be transferred if your Advance Directive is not followed at the religious institution.

How can I ensure that the EMT or paramedic responding to my emergency needs will honor my DNR wish?

- Can't ensure that an emergency medical technician (EMT) or paramedic will honor your DNR (do not resuscitate) or DNI (do not intubate) wishes.

How much does a medical alert bracelet cost?

- A MedicAlert (Turlock, CA) bracelet costs about \$25. Membership is about \$75/year. Other companies do make medical alert bracelets but may not have 24/7 access but that may not be needed.
- Suggest make a wallet card with key info.
- Mydirectives.com – wallet card with QR code, free.
- ICE (In Case of Emergency) apps for your cellphone

Where can I request additional presentations like this one?

- Contact Compassion and Choices.
 - <https://compassionandchoices.org/survey/request-a-presentation-from-compassion-choices/>
- Happy to do this again or address other items.

Compassion and Choices has a helpful My End-of Life Decisions Advance Planning Guide and Toolkit, can download it for free, helps you think through things and provides helpful forms and resources.

