



Advance Care Planning

Advance Care Planning is the process of thinking and talking about future medical decisions if you had a sudden event, like a car accident or illness, and could not make your own decisions. The best time to make these decisions is when you can choose for yourself.

Health Care Agent

A Health Care Agent is the person you choose to make medical decisions on your behalf if you are unable to make your own decisions. Discussing and sharing your wishes with your Health Care Agent is important.

Advance Directive for Health Care

An Advance Directive is a written plan that names your Health Care Agent and allows you to provide instructions for health care treatments based upon your values and what is important to you.

For more information about Advance Care Planning or for help creating an Advance Directive for Health Care, contact your health care team or Honoring Choices® Idaho.

HonoringChoicesIdaho.org

The name Honoring Choices® Idaho is used under license from Twin Cities Medical Society Foundation.

Who Makes a Good Health Care Agent?

Your Health Care Agent should be someone you know well and trust to follow your wishes about future health care. Ideally, choose one Health Care Agent and one or two backup (alternate) Health Care Agents. A Health Care Agent also is known as a *power-of-attorney for health care*, *substitute decision-maker*, *proxy* or *surrogate*.

How do I choose the right person?

Before choosing your Health Care Agent, ask yourself:

- ☐ Are they at least 18 years old?
- ☐ Will they be clearheaded in difficult or stressful situations?
- ☐ Will they be available when needed?
- ☐ Can I talk with them about my personal belief and values?
- ☐ Will they be able to ask questions and get answers from doctors and hospital staff?
- ☐ Will they follow my wishes, even if they don't agree?
- ☐ Will they be able to stand up for me against those who disagree?
- ☐ Are they willing to accept this role?

When is my Health Care Agent involved?

Your health care team will call on your Health Care Agent only when you are unable to make medical decisions and/or cannot communicate. Your Health Care Agent focuses only on health care decisions and is not authorized to make financial or business decisions for you.

What decisions might my Health Care Agent be asked to make?

- Starting, continuing, or stopping medical care or services, such as tests, medications, treatments, and surgery.
- Releasing my medical records.
- Choosing where and how I get my care.
- Assisting with funeral arrangements.

Share the information on the other side with the person you choose as your Health Care Agent.

Being a Health Care Agent

You have been chosen by _____ to be a Health Care Agent.

How can I prepare to be a Health Care Agent?

The best way to prepare for this important role is to talk with the person to understand his or her wishes for future health care. Be sure to talk about medical decisions that may come at the end of life. Being a Health Care Agent means you are trusted to make health care decisions on behalf of the person above if he or she cannot make those decisions. You may need to talk from time to time to see if his or her choices have changed.

To help you be prepared, talk with the person about:

“What does living well mean to him or her?”

“What brings comfort and joy?”

“What cultural, religious, spiritual, or personal beliefs, if any, are important in choosing care?”

During these conversations some people say things like:

“I want to die with dignity.”

“Don’t keep me alive with machines.”

“Just keep me comfortable.”

These words can mean many different things. Ask the person what he or she means.

Find help to have these conversations.

Talking about a person’s wishes for future health care may be uncomfortable. However, the more you understand and are clear about what someone wants, the more confident you will feel as a Health Care Agent.

Consider talking to professionals who help people with Advance Care Planning such as:

- Social workers
- Religious and spiritual leaders
- Health care providers