



Your Life, Your Decisions

Electronic Advance Directives - A Quick Guide

Regardless of age or health status, a medical crisis could leave you too ill or injured to communicate decisions about your health care. Thinking about the types of treatment you would or wouldn't like to receive and potential outcomes is important before a medical crisis occurs.

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING – DISCUSS

Advance care planning is an ongoing conversation with the people you trust – family, friends, health care providers (physicians and health care clinicians), and caregivers – to discuss your personal preferences and decisions that might need to be made in a medical crisis, not just end-of-life care. Advance care planning requires careful consideration of your values, religious beliefs, preferences for treatment, and acceptable outcomes. These conversations make your wishes known so they can be honored in the event you have limited or no capacity to make decisions for yourself. This eases the burden on family and loved ones and helps prevent conflicts about your care. Identifying who can speak on your behalf is important – in Maryland, this individual is called a health care agent. If you don't appoint a health care agent, your next of kin will be designated under law to make these decisions for you if you can't speak for yourself.

ADVANCE DIRECTIVE – RECORD

You have the option of creating an advance directive, a legal way to direct your medical care when you can't speak for yourself. You can appoint a health care agent to make health care decisions on your behalf and specify your treatment preferences in future situations, such as when to use life-sustaining treatments. Your advance directive should include the name and contact information of your health care agent and any back-up health care agents. Various advance directive forms are available from health care providers, religious organizations, estate planners, lawyers, and others. Make sure to provide a copy of your advance directive to your family members, health care providers, lawyer, or anyone else who should be aware of your decisions. **Remember – you can revoke your advance directive and complete a new one at any time.**

ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTATION – SHARE

You're strongly encouraged to create an electronic version of your advance directive. Talk to your health care provider about storing a copy of your advance directive and health care agent information in their secure electronic health record system. You may be able to add and update this information outside of clinical visits using the health care provider's patient portal, a secure online website where you're able to view your health record and communicate with your care team. You can also use an online service like [MyDirectives.com](https://www.mydirectives.com), which allows you to create, upload, share, and update your advance directive and health care agent information. Your information is secure, and health care providers involved in your care can access your information through [CrispHealth.org](https://www.crisphealth.org).

More information about how to get started with your advance directive, including sample forms, is available on the Maryland Attorney General's website: www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/HealthPolicy/AdvanceDirectives.aspx