



Advance Healthcare Directive

The Importance of Planning for Future Medical Decisions

All health care facilities that receive Medicare and Medi-Cal payments MUST provide patients with written information concerning 1) their right to accept or refuse treatment and 2) their right to prepare advance directives. The law does not require that you actually have or make an advance healthcare directive.

Under California law, adult persons with decision making capabilities have the right to accept or refuse medical treatment or life sustaining procedures. Artificial nutrition and hydration are among the medical procedures you have the right to accept or refuse.

What is an Advance Healthcare Directive?

An Advance Healthcare Directive is a document that lets you:

1. Give instructions about your own health care.
2. Name someone else (an agent) to make health care decisions for you if you are unable to make your own decisions.
3. Express your wishes regarding organ and tissue donation following your death.
4. Select a physician to have primary or main responsibility for your healthcare.

Other Important Documents

POLST - Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment

- Gives seriously-ill patients more control over their end-of-life care, including medical treatment and extraordinary measures, such as ventilator, feeding tube, and CPR.
- Must be signed by both provider and patient

DNR - Do Not Resuscitate

- Official state document which allow a patient with a life threatening illness or injury to forgo specific resuscitative measures that may keep them alive

Examples: CPR, assisted ventilation, endotracheal intubation, defibrillation, cardiotoxic drugs

Where can you get an Advance Directive and/or POLST?

There are various places to obtain more information on Advance Directive and POLST:

- Senior Centers
- Hospitals

- Hospices
- California Medical Association, (800) 786-4262, www.cmanet.org
- Coalition for Compassionate Care of California, (916) 489-2222, www.coalitionccc.org

DNR/POLST information can be obtained at:

- California Emergency Medical Services Authority, (916) 322-4336, www.emsa.ca.gov

Reasons You May Want to Prepare an Advance Directive

- To ensure you receive the care & services you desire and prevent unwanted or ineffective treatments
- To ensure the refusal of treatment at a determined stage if you have previously stated your desires
- To designate the person you would like to make your decisions on your behalf when you are unable to make those decisions yourself
- To ensure that family & friends understand your wishes regarding your health care. If you do not make your wishes clear, your family members and friends may not agree about the type of care and treatment you would want.

By being prepared with an Advance Healthcare Directive, you can decide **what type of treatment** you want, and **who** you want to speak for you.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who can be a witness?

A: Any who is NOT:

- An operator or employee of a community care facility or a residential care facility where you are receiving care
- Your health care provider (the doctor managing your care)
- An employee of the health care facility where you are receiving care, unless your agent is related to you or is a coworker

Q: What if I change my mind?

A: You can cancel your Advance Healthcare Directives **at any time**. To cancel the entire form, you must inform your health care provider.

Q: Do I need a lawyer to complete an Advance Healthcare Directive?

A: **No**. As long as you have 2 witnesses, you do not need to have a lawyer or a notary. The only exception applies to individuals who have been involuntarily committed to a mental health facility.