

Advance Care Planning

Preparing for future decisions about your care



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this handout.*

Part of living well or helping someone live well with a serious illness involves adapting to their needs as the illness progresses. During this time, it is important that you and your loved ones talk about your beliefs, values, and wishes for end-of-life care.

What is advance care planning?

Advance care planning allows you to make your wishes known to your loved ones and care providers. This gives you the peace of mind that your wishes will be respected if the time comes when you cannot speak for yourself. It also helps ease anxiety for your loved ones who will be making important decisions about your care.

Advance care planning includes:

- Learning about life-sustaining treatments. They include giving nutrition and fluids, using a breathing machine (*ventilator*), resuscitation, surgery, and more.
- Talking with your loved ones about your personal values and spiritual beliefs about death and dying.
- Deciding who you would want to speak for you and make decisions about your care if you cannot do so for yourself.
- Deciding what medical treatments you would want if you are no longer able to make decisions for yourself.
- Preparing legal documents of your end-of-life preferences and giving copies to healthcare providers.



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What forms do I need?

Here are some of the forms included in advance planning:

- **Living Will:** This legal form explains your desires for medical treatment if you cannot speak for yourself. Give copies of this form to your family members and to each of your healthcare providers. In Washington state, a living will does not need to be notarized. Ask your social worker for a blank form.
- **Medical Power of Attorney:** This legal form allows you to appoint a trusted person to make medical decisions for you, if you cannot make them for yourself. This person should know your wishes and be willing to accept this role. In Washington state, this form does not need to be notarized. Ask your social worker for a blank form.

- **Financial/Durable Power of Attorney:** You can name a trusted person to be your financial/durable power of attorney. This person has the right to make financial decisions on your behalf when you cannot make them for yourself. If you have more than one bank account, you will need to give a copy of this form to each bank or financial institution. In Washington state, this form **does** need to be notarized. Ask your social worker for a blank form.
- **Will:** A will is a legal document that tells what you want done with your property, money, and other possessions after death. It also describes a plan for your children’s care, if needed. If you do not have a written will, the laws of the state can decide how your money and children are passed along to family members. Many people hire a lawyer to help them write their will, but you can also find outlines online. A will **does** need to be notarized.
- **POLST (Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment):** This form states your treatment wishes if you are seriously ill. State law requires that all healthcare providers follow these orders when providing your care. This care may be given in a hospital, nursing home, assisted living facility, your own home, or by paramedics. You and your provider fill out a POLST form based on your goals of care. Both of you must sign the form. It does not replace other advance directives. You will still need those forms if you want to name a legal healthcare decision maker. Ask your provider for a blank POLST form.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Ask your doctor or healthcare provider to connect you with a social worker who can help answer your questions or concerns.

Your provider or social worker’s name and number:
