

Advance Directives

***Making your wishes known about your personal health care choices. This can be a difficult topic to discuss, but a vital one none the less.**

***What are Advance Directives?**

Advance directives tell your physician and other health care professionals what type of care you would like to have, and the person you would like to speak on your behalf, if you are unable to make medical decisions.

***What is a Living Will?**

A Living Will describes the type of medical treatment you want in certain situations. For example; would you want artificial nutrition or mechanical ventilation? A Living Will is only used if you are terminally ill or permanently unconscious.

***What is a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care?**

A Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care (DPOAHC) document allows you to choose another person to act on your behalf in making health care decisions if you are unable to do so. This document allows you to decide which treatments you do or do not want or for what duration of time you would want to have specific treatments, such as; a feeding tube or mechanical ventilation.

***What are the differences between a Living Will and a Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare?**

A DPOAHC takes effect when you become unable to make decisions- for example when you are under anesthesia or unconscious. A Living Will takes effect when there is no hope of recovery. It is recommended that you have both a DPOAHC and a Living. If the terms of these documents conflict, the DPOAHC will overrule the Living Will.

***What is a DNR order?**

A do not resuscitate (DNR) is one type of advance directive. This order allows you to decide if you want to have cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or other treatment if your heart stops or if you stop breathing.

***How do I choose a health care agent?**

A trusted friend or family member can act on your behalf. You must make sure to have a conversation with your surrogate decision maker. You should make your wishes known regarding treatments you would want. It is recommended that you choose two people to act as your agents. The first person named on the document will have authority to make decisions on your behalf. In the event that the first agent is unable to serve, the second person will have the authority to make decisions on your behalf.

***Who should have copies of my advance directives?**

You should retain a copy for yourself, provide a copy of your documents to your doctor and your health care agent. If you are anticipating a hospitalization, you should bring a copy with you.

***Where can I find more information?**

Foundation for Healthy Communities www.healthynh.com

Your physician's office and your GSIL LTS Program Coordinator can also provide additional information.

Sources: Making Decisions For Someone Else: A New Hampshire Handbook (2007)