

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

You can change your advance directive or cancel it at any time, as long as you can communicate your wishes. If you decide to change the person who makes your healthcare decisions, you will need to sign a statement or tell the doctor who is in charge of your care.

WILL I STILL BE TREATED IF I DO NOT MAKE AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

Absolutely. Even if you do not have advance directives, you will still get medical treatment. We just want you to know that if you become too sick to make decisions, someone else will have to make them for you. A Power of Attorney For Health Care lets you choose someone to make decisions for you when you can not speak for yourself, although if you wish, you can also let your agent make decisions earlier.

You create an Individual Health Care Instruction by writing down your wishes about health care or by talking with your doctor and asking the doctor to record your wishes in your medical file. This is a good way to let your doctor and others know about treatment that you do or do not want.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I BECOME TOO SICK TO MAKE MY OWN HEALTH DECISIONS AND I DO NOT HAVE AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVES?

If you have not named an agent, your doctor will ask your closest available relative or friend to help decide what is best for you. This works most of the time, but sometimes your relatives or friends may not agree about what to do. That is why it is

helpful if you let them know in advance what you want to happen if you can not speak for yourself.

DO I HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL I AM SICK TO EXPRESS MY WISHES ABOUT HEALTH CARE?

No. It is better to express your wishes before you get sick or have to go into a hospital, nursing home, or other health care facility.

WHERE CAN I GO IF I NEED HELP COMPLETING MY ADVANCE DIRECTIVES?

If you need help completing your advance directive, you may contact:

Patients' Rights Advocate
(559) 492-1652

Central California Legal Services
(559) 570-1200

www.calhealth.org
(Forms available under Publications/Forms and Posters)

If you are 65 years or older, you may contact:

Office of Ombudsman Services
(800) 896-4042 (toll free) or
(559) 244-9177

WHAT CAN I DO IF I FEEL THAT MY ADVANCE DIRECTIVES ARE NOT BEING FOLLOWED?

If you feel that your advance directive is not being honored, you may complain to:

California Department of Health Services
Licensing and Certification
P.O. Box 997413
Sacramento, CA 95899-1413
(800) 236-9747 (toll free)

ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

Your Right To Make
Decisions About Medical
Treatment

This brochure explains how you can plan now for your medical care so that your wishes will be known if at some time in the future you are not able to speak for yourself.



Fresno County
Mental Health Plan
1-800-654-3937



Advance Directives
English 07/2017

■ ■ ■ ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

WHAT IS AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

An advance directive is a legal document that allows you to say what kind of medical treatment you wish to receive when you are not able to speak for yourself. It also allows you say who you want to speak for you when you are not able to speak for yourself. This is called *advance* because you state your wishes before healthcare decisions need to be made. They are called *directives* because you state who you want to speak on your behalf and what type of healthcare you want.

Advance Directives have two parts. In the first part, you appoint someone to make health care decisions if you are not able to do so—this is called a “Power of Attorney for Health Care.” In the second part, you express the health care treatment you want to receive—this is called an “Individual Health Care Instruction.”

WHO CAN HAVE AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

Any person who is 18 years of age or older and is capable of making his or her own medical decisions. If you are an emancipated minor, you may have an advance directive.

WHO DECIDES ABOUT MY TREATMENT?

Your doctors will give you information and advice about treatment. You have the right to choose the treatment you want. You have the right to say “No” to any treatment that you don’t want—even if that treatment might keep you alive longer.

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT I WANT?

Your doctor must tell you about your medical condition and the different treatment and pain management alternatives you can choose. Your doctor must also give you information about problems you may have as a result of treatment. You may have choices to make about different forms of treatment. People have different ideas about what is best for them. Your doctor can tell you about different treatments that are available, but your doctor can not make a decision. That decision is yours to make.

CAN OTHER PEOPLE HELP WITH MY DECISIONS?

Yes. Patients often turn to their relatives and close friends for help in making medical decisions. They can be helpful as you think about the choices you face. You can ask the doctors and nurses to explain your choices to your relatives and friends; they can ask the doctors and nurses questions about your care.

CAN I CHOOSE A RELATIVE OR FRIEND TO MAKE HEALTHCARE DECISIONS FOR ME?

Yes. You may tell your doctor that you want someone else to make health care decisions for you—ask the doctor to list that person as your health care agent in your medical record. The agent will only be allowed to make medical decisions during treatment for your current illness or injury or until you leave that medical facility.

WHO CAN I NAME AS MY AGENT?

You can choose an adult relative or any other person you trust to speak for you when medical decisions must be made.

WHAT IF I DO NOT WANT TO NAME AN AGENT?

Even if you do not want to name an agent, you can still write out your wishes in your advance directive. You can say that you want to have your life continued as long as possible or you can say that you would not want more treatment to continue your life. You can also express your wishes about the use of pain relief or any other type of medical treatment.

If you have not filled out a written Individual Health Care Instruction, you can still discuss your wishes with your doctor and ask your doctor to put your wishes in your medical record. You can talk about your wishes with family members or friends, but it will probably be easier for them to follow your wishes if you write them down.

WHEN DOES MY AGENT BEGIN MAKING MY MEDICAL DECISIONS?

A health care agent will usually only make decisions after you lose the ability to make decisions for yourself. However, you may also state in the power of Attorney For Health Care that you want your agent to begin making decisions immediately.

HOW DOES MY AGENT KNOW WHAT I WANT?

When you choose an agent, you should talk with that person about what you want. Some treatment decisions are hard to make and it is very helpful if your agent knows what you want. You can also write your wishes in your advance directive.