

Advance Health Care Directives – Information Sheet

An Advance Health Care Directive lets you name someone to make treatment decisions for you. That person can make most medical decisions—not just those about life-sustaining treatment—when you can't speak for yourself. Besides naming an agent, you can also use the form to say when you would and wouldn't want particular kinds of treatment.

Who makes the decisions about my treatment?

Generally, you do, although there are some exceptions spelled out in laws and regulations. You have the right to agree to treatments you want to receive and to refuse treatments you don't want to receive.

How do I get information to make my decisions?

Your doctor must inform you about your medical condition and about what different treatments can do for you. Your doctor must also tell you about serious problems that medical treatment is likely to cause you.

What if I'm too sick to decide?

You can use an Advance Health Care Directive to name someone to make treatment decisions for you when you can't. You can also use the Advance Health Care Directive to write down your wishes about medical treatment ahead of time. That way the person you have named will know what you want.

Who can I name to make the decisions for me when I'm too sick to decide?

An adult who you trust to make decisions for you as your agent.

What if I don't name someone to make treatment decisions for me when I can't?

If you can't make the decisions yourself, someone will have to make the decisions for you. If you haven't named someone to make the decisions when you can't, then it may fall to your family or the doctor to make the decisions. By writing down your wishes about medical treatment ahead of time, you can let them know what you want, even if you haven't named someone to decide for you.

Do I have to use a special form?

You don't have to use the form, but using a form that meets the legal requirements for an Advance Health Care Directive will make it easier for doctors to follow your wishes if someone, such as a relative, disagrees with what you wrote down that you wanted. If you don't use the form, you can write down your wishes about your medical treatment on a piece of paper. In fact, you can tell the doctor what you want and ask the doctor to write it down. Again, using the form makes it more likely that your wishes will be followed.

What if I change my mind?

You can change or revoke what you wrote or told the doctor just by telling the doctor that you have changed your mind.

Do I have to fill out an Advance Health Care Directive?

No, it is completely voluntary.

If I do fill one out, what do I do with it?

It is your responsibility to give your healthcare providers a copy. Be sure to keep one for yourself.

How can I get more information about Advance Health Care Directives?

Ask your care coordinator or your doctor to get more information for you.

At Behavioral Health Services we respect your right to consult with your health care providers and to participate in decisions regarding your medical care. Our policies reflect compliance with California and federal laws on advance directives. We do not condition the provision of care or otherwise discriminate against anyone based on whether or not you have an advance directive.

Complaints concerning noncompliance with the advance directive requirements may be filed with the California Department of Health Services (DHS) Licensing and Certification by calling (800) 236-9747 or by mail at P.O. Box 997413, Sacramento, California 95899-1413

For further information go to Orange County Office of Aging at <http://www.officeonaging.ocgov.com/resources/downloads>