

ADVANCE DIRECTIVES BOOKLET

One



Carolinas HealthCare System

## Information about Advance Directives

If you suddenly became ill or were injured, do you know what type of healthcare you'd want to receive? If you were no longer able to express your wishes, would your doctor and family know what you would want?

This booklet will help you think about these questions. We want you to understand and be part of your medical care. We hope that you will take the time to read this booklet and take action that is right for you.

### What are Advance Directives (ADs)?

Advance directives are forms you fill out to describe the kinds of medical care you want if something happens to you. They are used if there is a time you can't speak for yourself. They tell your family and your doctor what to do if you're badly hurt or are too sick to say what you want.

As long as you can still make your own decisions, your advance directive won't be used. You can stop or say "no" to treatment at any time.

It is important that you tell others your healthcare wishes. This includes family, close friends and clergy. It also helps to talk to your doctors, nurses and other members of your healthcare team.

The different types of advance directives are:

- A Living Will.
- A Healthcare Power of Attorney.
- An Advance Instruction for Mental Health Treatment.

## A Living Will

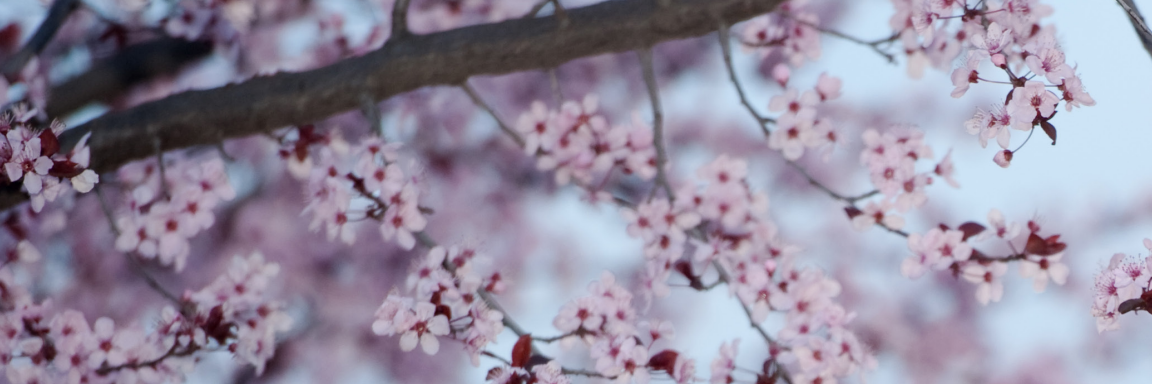
A Living Will tells your family and your doctor what kinds of care and treatment you want as you near the end of your life. It says what you want if you can no longer speak for yourself. Some people call this having a natural death.

A Living Will is used when you are very sick with no hope of getting better. It is used when treatments will only make the process of dying longer.

### How do I prepare a Living Will?

1. Review a Living Will form (ask for an example). If you have any questions, talk with your family, doctor, clergy or lawyer. Think about any special directions that you want to include. Write or type these
2. directions and attach them to the form.
3. Sign the Living Will in front of two witnesses who are not related to you. The witnesses cannot be people who might gain money or property from you. Your doctor, the doctor's employees and employees of your hospital or nursing home cannot be witnesses.
4. Make copies of your Living Will for yourself. Give copies to close family members and your lawyer, if you have one. Give a copy to your doctor or hospital. It needs to be in the medical record kept by your doctor to make sure your wishes are followed.





## HealthCare Power of Attorney

### What is a Healthcare Power of Attorney (HCPOA)?

The HCPOA lets you choose a person to make medical decisions for you when you are very sick and cannot speak for yourself. The HCPOA can also be called a healthcare agent.

You can say what treatments you want or do not want. This includes surgery or getting fluids or nutrition through a tube. You do not need to get advice from a lawyer to complete a HCPOA form. The person you choose as HCPOA should understand and respect your healthcare wishes.

### How do I Prepare a HCPOA?

1. Review a HCPOA form (you can ask to see an example). Think about whether you want to change the form or prepare your own form. Think about any special directions you want to include that guides your HCPOA. Write or type these directions and attach them to the form.
2. Choose a person to speak for you as a HCPOA. Ask him or her if they will do this for you. Tell him or her as directly as possible the kinds of decisions you want made for you.
3. Sign and date the form in front of two witnesses. They cannot be hospital employees, family members or close relatives. The completed form should be notarized by a notary public who must watch you and the two witnesses sign. Our hospitals have people trained to help you with notarizing your HCPOA.
4. Make copies of your HCPOA for yourself, your doctor, your HCPOA, close family members and your lawyer, if you have one. Keep the original in case you are asked to provide it.



## Advance Instruction for Mental Health Treatment (AIMHT)

### What is an AIMHT?

An AIMHT is a form that allows you to write down how you would like your mental healthcare handled in the future. It is much like a Living Will. It goes into effect only if you can't make sound choices due to mental illness.

You can create a document that gives someone else the legal right to make mental health decisions for you. You can write down directions about the treatments you do or do not want to receive.

### How do I Prepare an AIMHT? You can prepare it in the same way you would prepare a Living Will.

1. Review an AIMHT form (ask for an example). If you have any questions, talk with your family, doctor, clergy or lawyer. Think about any special directions and include them on the form.
2. Sign the AIMHT form in front of two witnesses. The witnesses cannot be related to you or be likely to inherit money or property from you. Healthcare employees and nursing home employees cannot be witnesses.
3. Make copies of your AIMHT form for yourself. Give copies to close family members and your lawyer, if you have one. Keep the original form in a safe place. Give copies of the form to your doctor and anyone you have appointed to make decisions for you. Give a copy to the hospital if you are being admitted to the hospital. A copy needs to be in your medical record and/or hospital chart to make sure your wishes are followed.

## Carolinas HealthCare System's Policies for Advance Directives

- We respect the rights and responsibilities of patients to make choices about their healthcare. This includes decisions to withhold or withdraw treatment that keeps you alive.
- We are committed to providing you with healthcare treatment information and listening to your treatment choices. You have the right to accept or refuse any medical treatment.
- We will not discriminate against anyone based on whether or not the person has written ADs.
- We will honor treatment decisions stated in your ADs, except where we believe it is not medically indicated or not ethical to do so. If the medical center or doctor cannot honor your AD based on the above policies, we will make every effort to transfer you to a facility that will.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Here are a few questions people often ask about Living Wills, Healthcare Powers of Attorney (HCPOA) and Advance Instructions for Mental Health Treatment (AIMHT).

**How long are ADs effective?** The documents are valid until they are changed by you.

**Can I change my ADs?** Yes, you may change your AD at any time.

You may do this by:

- Destroying the original document
- Putting your change in writing
- Telling your doctor, nurse and family about the change.

If you change your directive, you should give new copies to your family, doctor, lawyer, or others who may be involved. Your doctor must know about the change in order to follow your wishes.

**Is a Living Will the same as a Last Will and Testament?**

No, it is not the same.

**Does the person I name to make healthcare decisions for me have power over my property or money?**

No, your healthcare agent's power is limited to healthcare matters.

## Can I name more than one person as my healthcare power of attorney?

You can name up to three people as your healthcare agents. The first person listed will be your primary healthcare agent. The second and third people will be backups to your primary agent

## If I choose a person to make healthcare decisions for me, does that mean I will no longer be able to make my own healthcare decisions?

No, you will continue to make your own healthcare decisions as long as you are able to understand treatment options and say what you want. In order for your HCPOA to be activated, a doctor must determine that you are not able to understand information and/or not able to effectively communicate what you want for your care and treatment.

## What are life-sustaining treatments?

Some medical treatments can lengthen or prolong a person's life. We would like for you to think about these. Talk about your choices with your family, friends and doctor. It is important that your wishes be known in case you are unable to speak for yourself.

Life-sustaining treatments do not include anything done to reduce pain. If you decide to stop life-sustaining treatment, we will continue to provide comfort and reduce pain.

These are some life-sustaining treatments for you to think about when completing your advance directive forms:

- Receiving cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) if your heart stops.
- Being on a machine that pumps air into your lungs through a tube (ventilator) if you can't breathe on your own.
- Being on a machine that cleans your blood if your kidneys stop working (dialysis).
- Receiving fluids through a tube if you can't eat or drink.
- Taking medicines to treat serious infections.

## What if I don't have an advance directive?

The decision to have written directives is a very personal one. The best way to make your wishes known is to put them in writing. Some people find it comforting to have written directives. They feel it eases the load of decision making for family and friends.



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#### References

- ▶ [NCMedSoc.org/advocacy/public-health/end-of-life-resources/](https://www.ncmedsoc.org/advocacy/public-health/end-of-life-resources/)
- ▶ [Ncdhhs.gov/dhsr/EMS/dnrmost.html](https://www.ncdhhs.gov/dhsr/EMS/dnrmost.html)

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