



Your Life, Your Decisions

Advance Directives Information Sheet

Regardless of age or health status, a medical crisis could leave you too ill or injured to communicate decisions about your health care. Thinking about the types of treatment you would or wouldn't like and potential outcomes is important before a medical crisis occurs. Start the conversation with family, friends, health care providers, an attorney, or religious advisor.

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING – DISCUSS

Advance care planning is an ongoing conversation with people you trust to discuss your personal preferences and decisions that might need to be made in a medical crisis, not just end-of-life care. Advance care planning requires careful consideration of your values, religious beliefs, preferences for treatment, and acceptable outcomes, which are documented in an advance directive or a Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST) form. An advance directive is not the same as a MOLST form; to learn more about the Maryland MOLST form, visit marylandmolst.org. These conversations make your wishes known so they can be honored in the event you have limited or no capacity to make decisions for yourself. This eases burden on family and loved ones and helps prevent conflicts about your care. Identifying who can speak on your behalf is important – in Maryland, this individual is called a health care agent. If you don't appoint a health care agent, your next of kin will be designated under law to make decisions for you if you can't speak for yourself.

ADVANCE DIRECTIVE – RECORD

You have the option to create an advance directive, a useful and legal way to direct your medical care when you can't speak for yourself. You can appoint a health care agent to make decisions on your behalf and specify your treatment preferences in future situations, such as when to use life-sustaining treatments. Pick someone you trust to make these serious decisions and talk to that person to make sure they accept the responsibility. Include their name and contact information and any back-up health care agents in your advance directive. Various advance directive forms are available from health care providers, religious organizations, estate planners, lawyers, and others. There is no one form that must be used; you can personalize your advance directive to fit your wishes. Make sure to provide a copy of your advance directive to your family, health care providers, lawyer, or anyone else who should be aware of your decisions. **Remember – you are not required to have an advance directive, and you can revoke your advance directive and complete a new one at any time.**

ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTATION – SHARE

An advance directive can be most effective if you make it available in electronic form that is easily accessible by a health care provider. Talk to your health care provider about storing a copy of your advance directive and health care agent information in their secure electronic health record system. You may be able to add and update this information outside of clinical visits using the health care provider's patient portal, a secure online website where you can view your health record and communicate with your care team. You can also use a State Recognized electronic advance directives service to create, upload, share, and update your advance directive and health care agent information; learn more about how health care providers involved in your care can access your information at crisphealth.org/for-patients/#advance-directives.