


What Does It Mean For Me?

“Advance Care Directives”

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* Advanced Care Plan (*Health Care Directive*)

- Many people lose the ability to express what they want when they are very ill, seriously injured or close to death.
- An Advanced Care Plan (*sometimes called a living will or advance directive*) is the legal set of directions **you** develop for **your** medical care if a person is too ill or injured to communicate or make decisions.

Benefits of having an Advance Care Plan

This varies from person to person, they may include:

- Giving the gift of guidance, confidence and strength to those closest to **you**, in the event they have to speak for **you**
- Reducing the emotional distress on those closest to **you**

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- Providing clear instructions for health care providers and others who may have to make the decision for **you**.
 - Ensuring that you receive medical care that supports **your** values and/or faith tradition
 - Preventing the use of medical procedures that may prolong **your** life unnecessarily

When should you complete your Advance Care Plan

“The sooner the better”

- It is not something that should be done in the middle of a health crisis
- Better ahead of time in a non stressful environment and while **you** are mentally capable of doing so

Process of Completing your Advance Care Plan

- Thinking
- Talking
- Acting


Thinking

❖ Reflecting

- Has anything happened in your past that shaped your feelings about medical treatments?
- Think about an experience you may have had when someone close to you was very ill or dying
 - What was positive about the event?
 - What do you wish had been done differently?

Here and Now

- What brings **you** pleasure and joy?
- Who do **you** like to spend time with?
- What role does spirituality play in **your** life?
- What or who would **you** miss most if **you** were unable to function as you do now?
- What does living well mean to **you**?
- What are your goals for **your** life from now on?

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- Do **you** have any significant health problems at present? What are they? Might they get worse?
 - How will they affect the rest of **your** life?
 - How might medical treatments for **your** current health problems, help or make it difficult for **you** to accomplish your personal goals?

Here are some further questions to think about – based on the previous questions

- Would you want **your** life prolonged if there was little chance of recovery or return of abilities such as speech, walking, or thinking?
- When would it make sense to you to continue certain treatments in an effort to prolong **your** life and seek recovery?
- When would it make sense to you to stop or withhold certain treatments and accept death when it comes?

Medical Interventions

Medical interventions includes medications, treatment, and procedures used to treat a persons medical condition and symptoms.

Examples:

- Surgery to control pain (such as a broken hip)
- Pain-relieving medicine and treatments
- Medication to ease breathing difficulties

Medical Situations

Medical situations that might leave you unable to make **your own** health care decisions:

- Brain injury from an accident
- A severe stroke or heart attack
- Progressive diseases like Multiple Sclerosis or Alzheimer's
- Advanced lung or kidney disease
- End stage cancer.

Medical Treatments

❖ **Life Support**, these include:

- CPR, artificial breathing using a machine, tube feeding, artificial hydration (intravenous), and kidney dialysis

*Life prolonging treatments might be viewed by some as either **helpful** or **harmful***

❖ **Antibiotics**



❖ Comfort Measures Only

❖ Artificially Administered Nutrition

❖ Palliative Care

Talking

Decision Making

- When?
- With who? Alone or with family members
- Have **you** discussed with others outside the family – Doctors, health care providers, lawyer

This decision will take time to finalize, make it while **you** have the time!

Your Medical Goals of Care


- What kind of medical care do **you** want?
- You will need to decide what level of medical interventions **you** would like, including CPR and no CPR.

Decision Making

- Some people like to make their decisions alone and others will discuss the questions with various people.
- Some may need to talk with, family, health care provider or family doctor to get answers.
- At some point once most of the questions are answered the individual will need to decide what next.
- **THIS PROCESS TAKES TIME**

Questions to Consider when Talking

- What medical problems do **you** fear might affect **you** in the future?
- What frightens **you** most about medical treatment?
- How do **you** feel about going into a nursing home?
- Who could speak for **you**, if **you** could not?
- What would **you** want to happen if **your** heart or breathing suddenly stopped?

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- What would it take for **you** to want to be resuscitated?
 - What does **comfort measures only** mean to **you**?

When thinking of death, many people say, “Just keep me comfortable.” (*What does that mean for you*)


Proxy – Choosing your health care decision maker

The Health Care Directives and Substitute Health Care Decision Makers Act allows you to legally appoint the person of **your** choice to be **your** health care decision maker if you cannot speak for **yourself**. A **Proxy**

Appointing a Proxy must be in writing, signed and dated by **you**.

Discussing Your Choices

- Spend time discussing **your** decisions with your Proxy about **your** health care wishes, should you not be able to speak for yourself.
- This person will speak for **you** and make decisions on **your** behalf when **you** cannot.

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- Talk about what makes life meaningful for **you**
 - Talk about the difference between prolonging life and allowing natural death to occur
 - Talk about **your** goals for medical treatment

How bad would the situation need to be for you to say, “Don’t keep me alive in that state”

Explain the circumstances that might make you want certain treatments



Some situations for discussion include:

- When to begin life support treatments (CPR, ventilation, feeding tubes)
- When to withhold or withdraw life support treatments

Talk about CPR and life support measures



The Proxy should be asked what they think about **your** views

Tell the Proxy what frightens **you** about certain medical treatments and why

Tell the Proxy exactly what **you** want

What forms should you fill out and are legal

Things to consider:

- The Health Region has its own form “My Voice for Life-Sustaining Treatment Order (MVLST)” – Goals for Care
- Living Will

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Take all the time **you** need to make decisions about **your** health care decisions while you can

Don't wait till you can't speak for **yourself** and **somebody else** will make the decisions for **you**.



QUESTIONS?