



Advance Health Care Directives

Advance Health Care Directives are written instructions which communicate your wishes about the care and treatment you want if you reach a point where you can no longer make your own health care decisions.

An Advance Health Care Directive (AHCD) is a written power of attorney for health care naming an agent to make health care decisions for you that may be oral or written. The AHCD communicates your wishes about the care and treatment you want, and who you want to speak for you if you reach a point where you can no longer make your own health care decisions. Under California law, adult persons with decision-making capabilities have the right to accept or refuse medical treatment or life sustaining procedures. Some examples of medical procedures that you have the right to refuse might be artificial nutrition (feeding through a tube) and hydration (usually intravenous fluids).

Reasons why you may want to prepare an Advance Health Care Directive

- To ensure that you receive the care and services you desire.
- To ensure that care and services are not given when you indicated that you do not want them.
- To designate the person (agent or surrogate) you would like to make decisions on your behalf.
- To ensure that family, friends and your health care provider understand your wishes regarding health care. If you do not make your wishes clear, your family members, friends and health care provider may not agree about what type of care and treatment you would want. Without an advance health care directive, there is a possibility that your desires would not be carried out, or a conflict could lead to court delays.
- You make your wishes known, orally and/or in writing by declaring your desire to receive or not receive life-sustaining treatment under certain conditions and outline your instructions pertaining to health care.

The Advance Health Care Directive (AHCD)

- This is a legally effective written or oral instruction that allows the person you choose (agent or surrogate) to make health decisions for you when you are no longer able to make such decisions.
- A previously valid Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care is still valid and does not have to be replaced by the new Advance Health Care Directive UNLESS your health care instructions or the person you choose to make decisions for you have changed.
- You should select a person who knows you well and whom you trust to carry out your directions.
- The agent may not be a “supervising health care provider” even if related to you by blood, marriage, adoption or registered domestic partnership. This is to avoid a conflict between who is proposing treatment and who is making a decision about treatment.
- If you are currently a resident of a nursing home and preparing a new AHCD, your Directive must be witnessed by two qualified adult witnesses, one of whom must be with the Ombudsman Program. Your physician, the person you are designating as your agent or a nursing home employee may not act as witnesses.
- You do not need an attorney to complete the AHCD.
- You are NOT required to complete an AHCD when you enter a nursing home.

What if I change my mind after completing the AHCD?

- If you have capacity, you can revoke or change an AHCD at any time by informing your surrogate or agent, orally or in writing. The revocation must be clearly documented by health care providers. Completion of a properly completed new AHCD form revokes the old form.
- You should notify any agents, surrogates and your health care provider of your AHCD changes, especially if you have named a different person as your agent or surrogate.

You may obtain more information about advance directives from Caring Connections at 800.658.8898, or at: <www.caringinfo.org>.

How long is an AHCD valid?

A written AHCD is valid forever, unless you revoke it or state on the form a specific date on which you want it to end. An oral AHCD naming a surrogate is valid only during a specific course of treatment, illness or stay in the facility. An oral designation of surrogate supersedes a previous written one. An oral individual health care instruction is valid until it is revoked in a manner that communicates intent to revoke.

- Keep a few current copies of your AHCD form on hand as well as a list of people who have a copy of the AHCD.
- Keep a copy of the AHCD form in your wallet or purse with your health insurance card. This may assist emergency personnel to know what your wishes for care are in the event that you are unable to tell them.

For more information about Advance Health Care Directives,
contact Caring Connections at 800.658.8898 or www.caringinfo.org.