



# Create An Advance Directive

It's never too early to start the conversation.

## WHAT IS AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

An Advance Directive helps others know how you want to be treated if you become seriously ill and unable to speak for yourself. It also protects your family members from having to guess what you would want by documenting your wishes. While no one is required to have an Advance Directive, it is smart to think ahead and make a plan now.

## WHAT DOES IT INCLUDE?

You can decide who you want to make health care decisions on your behalf if you are unable to do so, not just when you are in a coma or are terminally ill. You can also use it to say what kinds of treatments you do or do not want, especially in a medical emergency or near end of life.

Someone you name to make decisions about your health care is called a **health care agent or medical decision maker**. This person has the authority to see that doctors and other health care providers give you the type of care you want and that they do not give you treatment against your wishes. Speaking to this person is important to make sure he or she understands and is willing to accept this responsibility.

## TYPES OF HEALTH CARE INSTRUCTIONS

Let your doctor know what treatments you want to have or not have if you are unable to speak for yourself. Examples of the types of treatment you might decide about are:

- ✓ Life support - such as breathing with a ventilator
- ✓ Efforts to revive a stopped heart or breathing (CPR)
- ✓ Feeding through tubes inserted into the body
- ✓ Accepting blood products
- ✓ Medicine for pain relief

Visit [prepareforyourcare.org](https://prepareforyourcare.org) for more info and resources



## GETTING STARTED

- 1 **Talk things over** with loved ones and/or your physician.
- 2 **Find a sample form** or even create your own Advance Directive document.
- 3 **Sign the document** in the presence of two witnesses, who will also sign.
- 4 **Give a copy** of your Advance Directive to your provider's office, nursing facility and others you trust.

## LEARN MORE

There are many places to get sample forms online and learn more about Advance Directives.

- ✓ **[prepareforyourcare.org](https://prepareforyourcare.org)**  
1. Click Advance Directive  
2. Select State: California  
3. Fill it out in PREPARE
- ✓ **[agingwithdignity.org](https://agingwithdignity.org)**  
Click Programs - Five Wishes

## ADVANCE DIRECTIVE VS. POLST AND DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY

The Advanced Directive has replaced the **Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care** (DPAHC) as the legally recognized document for appointing a health care agent/medical decision maker in California. If you have a DPAHC, it is still valid and unless it has expired, you do not need to complete an Advance Directive. However, because an Advance Directive gives you more flexibility to state your health care desires, you may wish to complete it even if you completed a DPAHC. A "POLST," or **Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment**, is intended to complement an Advance Directive, particularly for those who are seriously ill or have been diagnosed with a terminal illness.

## WHEN WOULD IT TAKE EFFECT?

Usually, your Advance Directive would take effect when your doctor certifies that you are not capable of making a decision about your care. If a health care agent is named, you should make clear in the Advance Directive when you want the agent to be able to make decisions for you.

## CAN YOU MAKE CHANGES?

You can change or take back your Advance Directive at any time. The most recently dated one will count. It is your duty to notify your healthcare providers, nursing facility and loved ones who have copies of the prior document and provide them copies of the most recent valid Advance Directive.

**Please feel free to ask your provider today if you have any questions about an Advance Directive.**