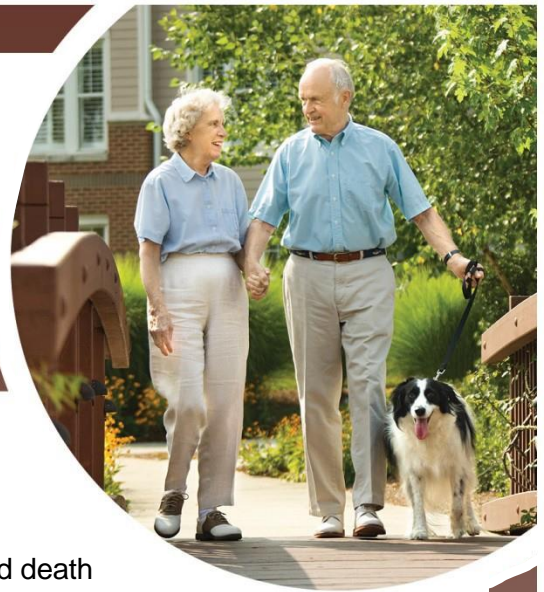


Advance Health Care Directives



Have you thought about what kind of health care you would want at the end of life? Would you want your family to use life-sustaining procedures such as mechanical ventilation or artificial nutrition and hydration if you are terminally ill or if you are in a persistent vegetative state? Would you want your loved ones agonizing over making life and death decisions for you during a time of emotional turmoil? By preparing Advance Health Care Directives, you can make your own legally binding decisions. One example of an Advance Health Care Directive is a Declaration of a Desire for a Natural Death or Living Will. A Living Will allows you to determine in advance the type of life sustaining medical treatment you will (or will not) receive when there is no hope of your recovery.

If you were in an accident that left you unable to make your own health care decisions or to speak for yourself, whom would you want to speak for you and make your medical decisions? Many times, the person who legally has the authority may not be the person you would have chosen. A Health Care Power of Attorney allows you to appoint someone as your agent to make medical decisions for you any time you are unable to make your own treatment decisions, not just at the end of life. You can include special provisions or specific limitations about any medical treatment. Your agent must be at least 18 and should be a family member or close friend whom you trust to act in your best interests and make serious and very important medical decisions for you.

To set up Advance Health Care Directives, such as a Living Will and a Health Care Power of Attorney, SECU recommends you consult with an attorney; however, if you are a North Carolina resident, more information and forms are available at the NC Secretary of State's Advanced Health Care Directive (AHCD) Registry website. The documents contain important information related to their proper execution, which you should review and discuss with an attorney if you have any questions. While an attorney is not required to set up an Advance Health Care Directive, you may wish to consult an attorney if you have a potential family conflict or specific legal concern.

Once your documents are prepared, it is important to make them easily accessible by providing copies and sharing your decisions with your loved ones and your physician. In addition, you may want to consider filing your documents with the NC Secretary of State's AHCD Registry. Although registration is not required, for a small fee, the registry service makes your documents readily available online to health care providers such as hospital and emergency physicians.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are Advance Health Care Directives?

Advance Health Care Directives are legal documents in which you give written instructions about your health care if, in the future, you cannot speak for yourself. These documents, which typically include a Health Care Power of Attorney, a Declaration of a Desire for a Natural Death (a Living Will) and an Advance Instruction for Mental Health Treatment, let you specify medical care in advance.

2. What is a Health Care Power of Attorney?

A Health Care Power of Attorney allows you to name a person you trust as your agent to make medical decisions for you if you are unable to make them yourself. You can include special provisions or specific limitations about any medical treatment.

3. Whom should I name as my agent in my Health Care Power of Attorney?

Your agent must be at least 18 and should be a family member or close friend whom you trust to act in your best interest and make serious and very important medical decisions for you.

4. What is a Living Will?

A Living Will, or Declaration of a Desire for a Natural Death, allows you to specify the type of life-sustaining medical treatment you wish to receive when there is no hope of your recovery.

5. May I revoke an Advance Health Care Directive?

Yes, you may change or revoke both a Health Care Power of Attorney and a Living Will by completing a written revocation form that is signed and notarized.

6. Who may establish an Advance Health Care Directive?

You must be 18 and of sound mind to establish an Advance Health Care Directive.

7. Do I need an attorney to set up an Advance Health Care Directive?

State approved forms for North Carolina residents are available through the NC Secretary of State's website. However, an attorney consultation is recommended if you have a potential family conflict or specific legal concerns.

8. What is the cost to have an Advance Health Care document prepared by an attorney?

Advance Health Care Directives are often, but not always, prepared at the same time you obtain estate planning documents such as wills and trusts. Attorney fees to draft an Advance Health Care Directive such as a Health Care Power of Attorney or Living Will can be as little as \$35 or much more depending on the complexity of your situation. You should ask about the fee before you agree to the services provided.

9. What should I do with my Advance Health Care documents?

You should give a copy to your primary physician, your Health Care agent and/or a trusted relative. You may also elect to file them with the Advance Health Care Directive Registry maintained by the NC Secretary of State's Office for \$10 per document. By filing your documents, they will be accessible via the internet with your username and password. More information is available at

<https://www.sosnc.gov/ahcdr/>.

Questions about Advance Health Care Directives may be answered by consulting an attorney or other agencies that specialize in end of life choices and issues. The material above is intended to be accurate; however, consultation with appropriate professionals for assistance is recommended.

