

WHAT IS AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?



Everyday Miracles Non-Medical

Home Health Care

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WHAT IS IT, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ME?

What is an Advance Directive?

It's generally a written statement, which you complete in advance of serious illness, and directs how you want medical decisions made.

The two most common forms of Advance Directives are: A "Living Will" and a "Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare." An advance directive allows you to state your choices for health care or to name someone to make those choices for you, if you become unable to make decisions about your medical treatments. In short, an advance directive can enable you to make decisions about your future medical treatment. You can say "yes" to treatment you want, or say "no" to treatment you do not want.

What is a Living Will?

A Living Will, which is known in Nevada as a "DECLARATION", directs a physician to withhold or withdraw life-sustaining treatment.

A Living Will only goes into effect under the following conditions:

1. You must have an incurable/irreversible condition that without the administration of life-sustaining treatment will result in death within a relatively short time; and
2. You are not able to communicate your desires, such as being in a coma.

****Please note if you have a Living Will that does not mean you will not receive pain medication or food and water. Nevada law specifically provides that a Living Will does not affect the responsibility of your doctor to provide treatment for your comfort or alleviation of pain. With respect to food and water, you may state in your Living Will that you do not want food and water withdrawn or withhold.**

What is a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care?

In Nevada, a "Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care" is a signed dated and witnessed paper naming another person, such as a husband, wife, daughter, son or close friend, as your "agent" or "proxy" to make medical decisions for you if you should become unable to make them for

yourself. You can include instructions about any treatment you want or wish to avoid, such as surgery or artificial feeding/breathing. The Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care will be in effect whenever you are unable to make decisions. The medical problem does not have to be terminal or incurable.

Do I need both a Living Will and a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care?

You can execute one or the other, or both of them. A Living Will is your personal statement regarding life-sustaining treatment. A Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care is much broader scope than the Living Will in that it covers any medical decisions not just a decision concerning life-sustaining treatment.

Do you have to write up an Advance Directive under Nevada law? No, it is entirely up to you.

Can you change your mind after you write a Living Will or a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care? Yes, both can be revoked either orally or in writing. It is better to revoke it in writing, if you are able to do so.

What should I do with my Advance Directive if I choose to have one?

Make sure that someone, such as your close family member or friend knows that you have an advance directive and knows where it is located. You should also do the following:

1. If you have a Durable Power of Attorney, give a copy or the original to your “agent” or “proxy”;
2. Ask your physician to make your Advance Directive part of your permanent medical record;
3. Keep a second copy of your Advance Directive in a safe place where it can be found easily, if it is needed;

4. Keep a small card in your purse or wallet, which states that you have an Advance Directive, where it is located, and who your “agent” or “proxy” is, if you have named one.

For more information: Contact Nevada Dept. of Health and Human Services, (775) 684-3606 or go to their website:
<http://dhcfp.state.nv.us/advancedirectives.htm>

*This information was taken from Div. of Health Sciences Univ. of Nevada.