

Essentials of Advance Health Care Directives



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- 1) **Health Care Agent** – This person will serve as your patient advocate to carry out your health care wishes if you are unable to do so.
- 2) **Living Will** – The one discretionary power your health care agent does not have is the power to withhold or withdraw life sustaining treatment. You must give explicit permission to do so if you are at the end of life with no meaningful hope of recovery.
- 3) **HIPAA Authorization** – This allows hospitals, doctors and other medical providers to speak freely to your agents. Without it, they cannot. Many older Health Care Directives lack this provision.
- 4) **POLST Authorization** – Practitioner Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment may be required by your treating physician if you are at the end stage of a terminal illness. If you cannot make your wishes known, your health care agent can do so to the best of his or her ability. This complements but does not replace the Health Care Agent / Living Will.
- 5) **Do Not Resuscitate** – If a person is at the end stage of an illness and does not want CPR, the DNR order must be on his or her medical chart. If a person is being cared for at home (e.g., on hospice) a mobile DNR is important to prevent EMTs from intervening.
- 6) **Maximum Pain Control** – Regardless of your medical condition, you request maximum pain control.
- 7) **Pregnancy Clause** – Women of child bearing age may include a clause directing life sustaining treatment to take a viable pregnancy to term.
- 8) **Care At Home Or Hospice Clause** – A preference by most people to be cared for in a home or hospice setting versus a hospital setting to allow for a more peaceful and personal passing.
- 9) **Organ Donation** – This allows doctors to harvest any useful organs (e.g., corneas, skin, and organs) prior to burial or cremation. There remains a tremendous need for organs especially from donors age 50+.
- 10) **Young Adults** – The most tragic lawsuits over right to die involved young adults: Karen Ann Quinlan (age 21), Nancy Cruzan (age 25), Terri Schiavo (age 26). Please be sure your young adult children (e.g., ages 18-30) have one!

The Goal: to avoid confusion and conflict in a time of emotional turmoil; to honor your end of life wishes, not anyone else's agenda; to have peace of mind that your affairs are in order.

- Do you have your affairs in order?
- Do your parent(s) have their affairs in order?

If you answered **NO** to either of these questions, please call us at 201-327-7000.