

— ADVANCE DIRECTIVES —

1. What is an Advance Directive?

It is a way for me to say what I want done or not done to me if I am very sick or in an accident, and can't decide for myself. The oldest and most common Advance Directive is known as a Living Will. It is also a good idea to fill out a form called a Durable-Power-of-Attorney-for-Health-Care. This tells the doctors who has the right to make decisions for me when I can't. Some forms will put the Power-of-Attorney and Living Will together into one form and may have other questions to answer.

2. Why should you write down what you want?

A serious illness or accident is a scary time for anyone. Important decisions may need to be made quickly and it may be hard for those who know me and love me to remember what I said or how serious I was at the time. Writing down what I want and who I want to speak for me is the best way to help the doctors know my wishes when I am too sick to talk. It is important that I do it so it is legal and can be used in making my medical decisions. **(The hospital has forms that can be filled out and made legal and people to help get the forms done for free. Ask your nurse or case manager for more information and if you need help.)**

3. How can you decide today what you want if you don't know what is going to happen in the future?

An Advance Directive doesn't try to answer every question. But, it will have questions for me to answer that will help those who have to make my decisions know some of my thoughts and ideas about life and death. It is the best way to tell others I care about what I want or don't want done to me and why.

4. Why make out an Advance Directive now? Why not wait until you are older or become sick?

The best time to talk with the people I love about what I want and to write things down is when I am feeling good and can think clearly. If I wait, it may be too late. Once I am sick, I may not be strong enough, able to think straight or be able to talk about what I want.

5. You said something about making the form legal. Does that mean you need to hire a lawyer to make out the form?

I do not need a lawyer to make out an Advance Directive. Many people will ask their lawyer to help them with this when they are making out their Will or other legal papers, but it is not necessary. All hospitals and nursing homes will have forms to use and may have people that can help fill out the form for free. Each state in the country has certain requirements they must meet in order for the form to be legal. In the state of Iowa, an Advance Directive must be notarized or witnessed by two (at least one non-related) persons who are not named on the front of the form or a part of the health care team providing care if it is to be legal.

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7. So, you made out an Advance Directive, had it notarized or witnessed. Now, what will you do with it?

I need to make sure that everybody knows what I want. I will make copies for the hospital records, for the doctors I go to and for anyone I want to make my decisions for me. If I put the original form I signed in a safe place (like a bank box or safe) it is a good idea to have copies in my home and car, so if there is an emergency, a copy will be available to let people know who to talk to and what I want done.

8. All right, I think I may want to fill out an Advance Directive. What should I do now?

If you are a patient in the hospital, tell your nurse or case manager. They will find someone to talk with you about Advance Directives, answer your questions, help you fill out a form if you want to and make copies. Your family members can also make out their own Advance Directives at the same time. **And, the help is always free!** Even if you're not in the hospital, you can ask for help with Advance Directives by calling **(515) 574-6236**. Leave a message and the person who calls you back will try to answer your questions and can help you get your Advance Directive done.

Other places to look for Advance Directive information and forms:

- “Five Wishes” booklet—Aging with Dignity, PO Box 1661, Tallahassee, FL 32302
- “The Gift of Peace of Mind” booklet—Drake University, Des Moines, IA 50311
- “Advance Medical Directives” booklet—Staywell Co., (800) 333-3032
- On the Internet:
 - www.elderweb.com
 - www.partnershipforcaring.org
 - www.hcfa.gov/pubforms/advdir.htm (Health Care Financing Administration)
 - www.agingwithdignity.org