

MEDICAL DECISIONS AND ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

You have the right to make decisions regarding your healthcare. While it may seem only natural to discuss your choices regarding treatment with your physician or healthcare provider, what if you were not able to communicate your wishes?

The State of New Hampshire and the Federal government have passed laws to ensure your right to retain control over your medical care in the event that you become unconscious or incapacitated (unable to make decisions regarding your healthcare, or to understand the consequences of your decisions).

The State of New Hampshire recognizes two kinds of Advance Directives: the Living Will and Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare. Anyone 18 years old or older can formulate Advance Directives. Once drawn up, an Advance Directive becomes a legal document. However, it can be revoked at any time either orally or in writing.

Living Will: If you have a Living Will, you will be instructing your physician what to do in the event life-sustaining procedures become necessary. If you do not wish to appoint an agent to act on your behalf, this document would still allow you to express your wishes. It becomes active only if you become terminally ill or permanently unconscious. For example, if you do not want to be fed or given fluids artificially (by tubes and intravenous lines), you would state so in a Living Will.

Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare (DPOAH): If you have a Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare, you are not only stating your preferences, but designating an agent to act on your behalf. Because you have designated an agent to act on your behalf, the directive may become active sooner than a Living Will document.

You are not required to have an Advance Directive in order to be admitted or to receive treatment, and you will not be discriminated against in any way, because you have or have not formulated an Advance Directive.

If you do have an Advance Directive, you are responsible for providing us with a copy of it upon admission. We ask that you provide us with the name and current phone number of your designated agent for our records. Should you decide to change or revoke your directive, you must notify your nurse and your physician.

If you do not have an Advance Directive and wish to prepare one, we suggest you talk with your family and your physician first. It is important for you to understand all aspects of your decisions. While we feel an Advance Directive is important to you and your loved ones, we do not advocate that you formulate an Advance Directive in haste. Take your time and give it some thought so you can make decisions that meet your wishes. Advance Directive forms are available upon request.