

# About Advance Directives

A Relief for You...

A Gift for Your Loved Ones.

# About Advance Directives

Every adult has the right to direct his or her own medical care. Having an advance directive on file helps to ensure that you receive the care you want if a medical condition or injury renders you unable to make decisions or communicate. Cleveland Clinic recommends that every person age 18 and older have an advance directive document recorded in their electronic medical record. This gives you the opportunity to discuss and/or plan your healthcare preferences with your loved ones.

Advance directives are legal documents that provide written instructions about who can make medical decisions on your behalf and what your end-of-life wishes are.

## Your rights and choices

You have the right to choose your own medical care based on your values, beliefs and personal choices.

You have the right to complete advance directive documents at no charge, as long as you understand your options and can communicate your wishes.

You have the right to NOT complete advance directive documents too. Advance directives are always optional.

An advance directive is especially important if:

- Your caregiver or healthcare representative is not your legal next of kin;
- You have multiple next of kin; OR
- You have specific medical wishes due to a medical condition, religious belief or family situation.

The Health Care Power of Attorney also allows you to identify an alternate agent (decision maker), in case your primary agent (decision maker) cannot be reached.

Without a Health Care Power of Attorney, Ohio law recognizes an Order of Decision Makers if you are unable to make healthcare decisions for yourself. If the state has appointed a guardian, this person is the first decision maker. If not, the Order of

Decision Makers for Ohio, according to the law, are:

1. Spouse
2. Majority of adult children
3. Parents
4. Majority of adult siblings
5. Other nearest relative

## Completing advance directive documents

You do not need a lawyer to complete advance directive documents. In order to be valid, the documents simply need to be signed by two witnesses or a notary. The witnesses may include anyone except the following: your designated decision maker(s); anyone related by blood, marriage or adoption; your attending physician; or the administrator of the nursing home/ residence where you are receiving care.

## Making changes to the documents

To ensure that your advance directive continues to reflect your preferences, it is recommended that you review your forms at least every five years, or at significant life events such as marriage, divorce, new medical diagnosis or the death of a loved one.

**You may make changes to the forms at any point by completing new documents, having them signed and making sure the most recent version is included in your electronic medical record. You may also revoke a previous advance directive document.**

## Talk with your loved ones about your wishes

Talking about end-of-life issues is difficult, but it truly is a gift to your loved ones. If your family members are aware of your healthcare preferences in advance, it will alleviate uncertainties and disagreements when and if the time comes.

We suggest using The Conversation Project ([theconversationproject.org](http://theconversationproject.org)) to help guide you through discussing and thinking about your wishes/preferences, goals and values and completing your advance directive.

## Types of Advance Directives

Document	Definition	When it's used
Health Care Power of Attorney (HCPOA)	<p>A legal document used to identify who is going to make healthcare decisions for you if you are unable to make decisions yourself. This person is called your “agent.”</p> <p>A Health Care Power of Attorney is not the same as a Financial Power of Attorney.</p>	<p>This document takes effect when you are unable to make your own healthcare decisions.</p> <p>(For example: under general anesthesia, under sedation, unconsciousness, coma, etc.)</p>
Living Will	<p>A legal document used to convey your wishes that life-sustaining treatment, including artificially or technologically supplied nutrition and hydration, be withheld or withdrawn.</p> <p>You wish to “allow a natural death.”</p> <p>If you meet criteria for the Living Will to be in effect, it supersedes the HCPOA.</p> <p>The Living Will allows you to also document your wishes regarding organ donation.</p> <p>A Living Will is not the same as your last will and testament.</p>	<p>The Living Will takes effect only when two physicians agree that you are terminally ill and unable to make your own healthcare decisions, OR that you are in a permanently unconscious state.</p>

### Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order

A Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order is not an advance directive document. It is a physician's medical order to allow natural death rather than performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). It is for patients with a terminal condition or those with a serious illness who wish to allow a natural death. A DNR order alerts emergency personnel to not provide CPR in the event that the heart or breathing stops, but instead to provide comfort care.

DNR orders agreed upon by the patient cannot be canceled by a family member without the patient's consent.

There are two types of DNR orders available in Ohio, and your doctor can explain the differences between each one. If you need further information about DNR orders, please talk to your doctor.

## What do I do with my forms after I complete them?

After you complete the advance directive document, talk to those people who may be involved with your healthcare decision making, and give them a copy of your forms to make sure your wishes are followed.

We encourage you to have a copy of your advance directive document placed in your (delete word electronic) medical record at Cleveland Clinic.

You can do so in any of the following ways:

Bring the document to your next appointment.

Mail them to:

Cleveland Clinic  
Health Information Management, Ab7  
Advance Directives Processing  
9500 Euclid Avenue  
Cleveland, Ohio 44195

Fax them to: 216.445.9733

Scan them to [advancedirectives@ccf.org](mailto:advancedirectives@ccf.org)

Please make sure that all required elements are completed prior to sending: (pages 1, 3, 8 and 9 on the State of Ohio Health Care Power of Attorney form).

## Further resources

Videos, advance directive information and forms can be found at: [my.clevelandclinic.org/patients/information/medical-decisions-guide/advance-directives](https://my.clevelandclinic.org/patients/information/medical-decisions-guide/advance-directives)

[theconversationproject.org](https://theconversationproject.org) is dedicated to helping people talk about their wishes for end of life care.

We urge you to take the time to complete your advance directive document. If you are not comfortable completing it, please seek out further information so that your questions can be answered.

Know that the same high quality patient care is given to all Cleveland Clinic patients, regardless of whether they have an advance directive in their medical record.

### Akron General Hospital

330.344.6880 Care Management  
330.344.6742 Spiritual Care

### Ashtabula County Med Center

440.994.7675 Care Management  
440.997.6628 Spiritual Care

### Avon Hospital

440.695.5217 Care Management

### Cleveland Clinic Main Campus

216.444.3213 Care Management  
216.444.2518 Spiritual Care

### Euclid Hospital

216.692.8800 Care Management

### Fairview Hospital

216.476.7070 Care Management

### Hillcrest Hospital

440.312.4662 Care Management

### Lutheran Hospital

216.363.2030 Care Management

### Marymount Hospital

216.587.8801 Care Management  
216.587.8141 Spiritual Care

### Medina Hospital

330.721.5070 Care Management  
330.721.5188 Spiritual Care

### South Pointe Hospital

216.491.7263 Care Management

### Weston Hospital

954.659.5000