

Advance Directives

If a family member was in a dire situation and unable to communicate to family or the health care team, would you know what your family member's wishes were regarding sustaining his/her life? Have you had a discussion with your family about your wishes?

Advance directive (AD) or living will is a back-up plan that clearly states your wishes when you cannot make healthcare decisions for yourself.

- Situations include physical illness or injury, a mental health crisis, or a treatment or disease that affects your thinking.
- The AD allows a designated person(s) to make healthcare decisions for you when you are unable. If you do not have an AD, a physician may contact a spouse, adult children, parent, adult sibling, other relatives, a friend, or court-appointed guardian.

Agent -The person you identify to make health related decisions for you. The terms medical power of attorney, or durable power of attorney are also used.

- The agent must be at least 18, should know your preferences and beliefs, can advocate for you, and is willing to take that position if needed.
- The agent cannot make decisions that conflict with your wishes.

Next step - write down your wishes

- Be as specific or general as you choose. Include your family, physician, or others in making your decisions. <https://www.fivewishes.org/> <https://honoringchoices-va.org/>,

Virginia requirements

- A lawyer is not required and the form does not need to be notarized. The form you select to use is your choice (various forms can be found on the web sites included).

For the AD to be legal in VA,

- Complete the form
- 2 adults witness your signature
- Witnesses then sign the form

After you have completed your AD share copies with your family, your agent, your PCP, or whoever would be appropriate for you. The AD can be changed or revoked at any time.

This overview provides some general information about advance directives. For more information see the resources included or feel free to contact Sharon Broscious.

Resources

<https://www.virginiaadvancedirectives.org/after-making-your-advance-directive.html>

<https://vsb.org/common/Uploaded%20files/docs/form-hl-nhdd-6.pdf>

<https://eforms.com/power-of-attorney/va/virginia-advance-medical-directive/>

<https://www.caringinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/Virginia.pdf>