


# **411 ON ADVANCE DIRECTIVES**

IN HONOR OF NATIONAL HEALTH CARE DECISIONS DAY  
APRIL 16 2014

# WHAT IF YOU COULD NOT SPEAK FOR YOURSELF?

- Who would speak for you?
- Would they know your wishes?
- Do you know what interventions you would or wouldn't want?
- Have you thought about making your Advance Directive?

# WHAT IS AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

- It is a legal and medical document.
  - In the document, you can name the person who would be responsible for voicing your wishes if you were unable to do so yourself.
  - An Advance Directive allows you to list treatments and cares that you would or would not want.
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# HOW IS IT BROKEN DOWN?

## Part 1: Choosing a Health Care Agent

- This is also known as your Healthcare Durable Power of Attorney or your Healthcare Proxy.
- This person will give voice to your wishes and make decisions for you, based on those wishes, in the event that you can not express your wishes yourself.
- An alternate can be designated, but it is important that all people involved in your healthcare decisions are on the same page.
- Needs to be at least 18 years of age or older

## Part 2: Choosing Health Care Instructions

- This section is also known as a Living Will
- Interventions to be addressed include:
  - Life support, intubation, CPR, antibiotics, tube feeds, hydration, pain medication, etc.

# GETTING STARTED

- Start by thinking about what parameters would guide your decision-making, and what specific interventions you would or would not want to pursue.
- Discuss your thought process and your decisions with your loved ones
- Ask the person you would like to be your health care agent if they are able to take the responsibility of being your healthcare agent, and discuss your thoughts with them
- A few of the options for documenting your decisions are:
  - Five Wishes,
  - Maryland Advance Directive
  - Self written

Having the conversation is just as important as the document!

# FIVE WISHES

1. The Person to Make Care Decisions for Me When I Can't
  2. Medical Treatment I Want or Don't Want
  3. How Comfortable I want to be
  4. How I Want People to Treat Me
  5. What I want my Loved Ones to Know
- Comes in 27 languages plus Braille
  - Considered a legal document in 42 states – Maryland included
  - Very simple and easy to use
  - Addresses many psychosocial and spiritual aspects of end-of-life care that are not addressed in other Advance Directive documents.

# MARYLAND ADVANCE DIRECTIVE

- Can be found on the MD Attorney General's website
  - <http://www.oag.state.md.us/healthpol/adirective.pdf>
- Available in seven different languages
- Has two main sections:
  1. Choosing your health care agent
  2. Preferences for efforts to extend your life in 3 situations
    - terminal condition, persistent vegetative state, and end-stage condition.
- There is also an After Death section that includes your decisions regarding:
  - Organ Donation
  - Donation or Disposition of the Body
  - Funeral Arrangements

# WHO IS YOUR PROXY IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO HAVE AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

In Maryland the following progression is followed if an agent is not determined by the patient, if the agent is not available, or if an agent declines to act in the role. In this case, a surrogate will be determined.

- Guardian (if determined by the Court)
- Spouse or Domestic Partner
- Adult Child of the Patient
- Parent of the Patient
- Adult Sibling
- If no close relative is available, a friend or more distant relative may make decisions. In this case, the proxy must sign a statement about his or her regular contact with the patient and familiarity with the patient's health and personal beliefs.



# WHAT IS THE JOB OF THE HEALTHCARE AGENT?


- The agent is to make decisions based on the following:
  - “Wishes of the patient,” unless those wishes are “unknown or unclear”
  - In that event, the agent is to act in what they believe to be the “patient’s best interest”

# WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH MY ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

- Sign your AD and have two appropriate witnesses sign.
- Make copies to give to your doctor and health care agent(s)
- Save your original in a safe and easily accessible location. Your Advance Directive is a living document. It should be readily available so that you can document any changes in your decisions, and so that those involved in your decision-making process have access to it.
- Copies are just as valid as the original. Make sure that if you make changes, that they are appropriately witnessed, and that your physician and agent have copies of the new documents.
- Fill out a wallet card to keep with you

Copies are just as valid as the original

# WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT AS A HEALTH CARE WORKER?

- Going through the process of addressing our own Advance Directives can help us to understand some of what our patients may experience. It can help to nurture compassion for those who are dealing with life threatening illnesses.
  - As members of the medical community, addressing our own Advance Directives is a way for us to be conscientious consumers of healthcare.
  - Any clarity that we can provide for those who care for us~ both professional and personal caregivers~ is a gift.
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# LINKS FOR MORE INFORMATION

## National Health Care Decisions Day

- <http://www.nhdd.org>

## Maryland Office of the Attorney General for a free AD

- <http://www.oag.state.md.us/healthpol/adirective.pdf>

## Five Wishes

- <http://www.agingwithdignity.org/>

I am available for any questions or for laminating your wallet cards once finished –

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