

# Plan ahead with an advance directive

It's not always easy to think about the future – especially when it comes to your health. But putting your wishes in writing now is one of the most important things you can do for yourself and the people who care about you.

An advance directive lets you share what matters most, even if you're too sick to speak for yourself. It gives your care team clear guidance and puts decisions in the hands of someone you trust.

## Understanding advance directives

An advance directive is a legal document that lets you state what medical care you do or do not want if you are unable to make those decisions for yourself. Only you – not a family member – can complete and sign this form.

Types of advance directives include:

- Healthcare power of attorney
- Prehospital medical care directive
- Living will
- Mental healthcare power of attorney

## If you can't make decisions for yourself

If you have not named someone in a healthcare directive to make decisions for you, your doctors will follow Arizona law to choose a surrogate decision-maker. The order is:

1. Spouse, unless you are legally separated
2. Majority of adult children age 18 or older
3. Parent
4. Domestic partner
5. Sibling
6. Close friend
7. Two physicians

## Healthcare power of attorney

This form allows you to name someone to make medical decisions if you cannot. Choose someone who knows you well, understands what is important to you and will respect your wishes. You can also name an alternate in case your first choice is unavailable.

The form must be signed and dated in front of a notary or a witness who is not related to you by marriage or adoption and does not benefit from your estate.

## | Plan ahead with an advance directive (continued)

### Living will

A living will is a written statement about the type of care you would or would not want in certain medical situations.

Like the healthcare power of attorney, it must be signed and dated in front of a notary or a witness who is not related to you by marriage or adoption and does not benefit from your estate.

### Prehospital medical care directive

Also known as a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) or orange form, this directive indicates that if your heart stops or you stop breathing, you do not want CPR or life support.

It is valid outside of hospitals and in emergency rooms in the state of Arizona.

### Mental healthcare power of attorney

This form allows someone you trust to make decisions about psychiatric care if you are unable to do so.

### After you complete your forms

Be sure to give copies to:

- The person you named as your healthcare power of attorney
- Your primary care provider
- Any hospital or healthcare facility where you receive treatment

Keeping these documents accessible ensures your wishes are understood and honored.

### A final note

Taking the time to complete your advance directive, living will or power of attorney is a gift – to yourself and to those who care about you. It offers peace of mind, knowing your wishes will be honored and your voice will be heard, even if you can't speak for yourself. If you have questions or need help getting started, talk with your healthcare provider.