



# Advance Care Planning

## Getting Started

### If I am not able to say what I want, can someone else make health care decisions for me?

Yes. You can fill out an Advance Directive called a Power of Attorney for Health Care. This lets you name a Health Care Agent, or decision maker, to speak for you. It is important to let your Health Care Agent and family know what your wishes are. If you don't name someone to be your Health Care Agent, then state law has a set of rules for how decisions will be made for you if you can't speak for yourself. Many times, this involves the court appointing a guardian, which can be expensive, time consuming, and very difficult for families.

### Can you explain the different types of Advance Directives?

Your Advance Directives are your written wishes about your health care that you provide ahead of time. Each of these terms is one type of Advance Directive:

- A Power of Attorney for Health Care is an Advance Directive where you name a person to make health care decisions for you if you are unable to do so. This person is called your Agent. (This directive may also be called a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care, a Medical Power of Attorney.)
- A Living Will is another type of Advance Directive where you can indicate your wishes for health care in an emergency or end-of-life situation. In Wisconsin, the Living Will document is restricted to situations where a person is in a persistent vegetative state or has a terminal illness.
- A Declaration to Health Care Providers is an Advance Directive used to state preferences and wishes for health care in all types of situations and is broader than the Living will.
- A Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order is a doctor's order to tell medical staff and first responders that you do not wish to have CPR performed if your heart stopped beating or if you stop breathing.
- Signing up or registering to be an organ donor is another type of advance directive, as you are stating your wishes should you not be able to communicate.
- A Power of Attorney for Finances is another type of Advance Directive where you name who can speak and act for you regarding your finances if you are unable.

The Fox Valley Advance Care Planning Partnership uses an Advance Directive document that includes the Power of Attorney for Health Care along with space to state your wishes for care (Declaration to Health Care Providers). If this document does not meet your needs, there are others available. Please contact us if you have questions or need help.

### What do you mean when you say Wisconsin is NOT a next-of-kin state?

Wisconsin is one of a small number of states that does **not** have a surrogacy law (also called "Next-Of-Kin") for who will speak for you if you are alive, but unable to speak for yourself. People often think if they are in a car accident and cannot speak for themselves, their next-of-kin (maybe their parent, spouse, sibling, or adult child) will be automatically able to make these decisions. **This is NOT TRUE in Wisconsin!** If you want your next-of-kin to speak for you, you must complete a legal form to make your wishes known. If you **DO NOT** want your next-of-kin to speak for you, you must complete a legal form to make your wishes known.