Let's Talk: Health Care Agent

What is a health care agent?

Your health care agent (sometimes called your power of attorney for health care) makes health care decisions for you if you cannot. Health care agents may be needed for many reasons like if you are very sick, injured, or nearing the end of your life. You must choose your health care agent *before* you need them.

What decisions does a health care agent make?

Health care agents cannot make decisions for you unless you are not able. At that point, your health care agent may make decisions about:

- Your medical care, such as tests, medicine, surgery, and other treatments
- The location where you will receive medical care
- Who your doctor(s) will be
- Who has access to your medical records

Who should be my health care agent?

If you are an adult living in Wisconsin, you must choose your health care agent. Per state law, there is no person who can automatically make health care decisions for you (such as your spouse or next of kin) if you cannot. Your health care agent does not need to be related to you. Choose someone who:

- You trust to make decisions that are best for you
- Will follow your wishes even if they do not always agree with them
- You talk to regularly about what is most important to you
- Is willing to be your health care agent
- Can make decisions in high stress situations

The person you choose may decide they are unable or unwilling to be your health care agent at any time. If you are able, ask 1-2 other people that you trust to be your alternate health care agents.

How do I make this legal?

Complete a Power of Attorney for Health Care document to legally name your health care agent. You can get this document from your doctor's office or the Fox Valley Advance Care Planning Partnership. Help is available. Once it is done, share with your loved ones and other people you trust. Send a copy to your doctor's office to keep in your medical record.

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