



ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

Your Right To Make Decisions About Medical Treatment

This brochure explains how you can plan now for your medical care so that your wishes will be known if at some time in the future you are not able to speak for yourself.

**Fresno County
Mental Health Plan
1-800-654-3937**

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT I WANT?

Your doctor must tell you about your medical condition and the different treatment and pain management alternatives you can choose. Your doctor must also give you information about problems you may have as a result of treatment. You may have choices to make about different forms of treatment. People have different ideas about what is best for them. Your doctor can tell you about different treatments that are available, but your doctor can not make a decision. That decision is yours to make.

CAN OTHER PEOPLE HELP WITH MY DECISIONS?

Yes. Patients often turn to their relatives and close friends for help in making medical decisions. They can be helpful as you think about the choices you face. You can ask the doctors and nurses to explain your choices to your relatives and friends; they can ask the doctors and nurses questions about your care.

CAN I CHOOSE A RELATIVE OR FRIEND TO MAKE HEALTHCARE DECISIONS FOR ME?

Yes. You may tell your doctor that you want someone else to make health care decisions for you—ask the doctor to list that person as your health care agent in your medical record. The agent will only be allowed to make medical decisions during treatment for your current illness or injury or until you leave that medical facility.

WHO CAN I NAME AS MY AGENT?

You can choose an adult relative or any other person you trust to speak for you when medical decisions must be made.

WHAT IF I DO NOT WANT TO NAME AN AGENT?

Even if you do not want to name an agent, you can still write out your wishes in your advance directive. You can say that you want to have your life continued as long as possible or you can say that you would not want more treatment to continue your life. You can also

express your wishes about the use of pain relief or any other type of medical treatment.

If you have not filled out a written Individual Health Care Instruction, you can still discuss your wishes with your doctor and ask your doctor to put your wishes in your medical record. You can talk about your wishes with family members or friends, but it will probably be easier for them to follow your wishes if you write them down.

WHEN DOES MY AGENT BEGIN MAKING MY MEDICAL DECISIONS?

A health care agent will usually only make decisions after you lose the ability to make decisions for yourself. However, you may also state in the power of Attorney For Health Care that you want your agent to begin making decisions immediately.

HOW DOES MY AGENT KNOW WHAT I WANT?

When you choose an agent, you should talk with that person about what you want. Some treatment decisions are hard to make and it is very helpful if your agent knows what you want. You can also write your wishes in your advance directive.

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

You can change your advance directive or cancel it at any time, as long as you can communicate your wishes. If you decide to change the person who makes your healthcare decisions, you will need to sign a statement or tell the doctor who is in charge of your care.

WHERE CAN I GO IF I NEED HELP COMPLETING MY ADVANCE DIRECTIVES?

If you need help completing your advance directive, you may contact:

Patients' Rights Advocate
(559) 492-1652

**Central California Legal Services
(559) 570-1200**

www.calhealth.org

(Forms available under Publications/Forms and Posters)

If you are 65 years or older, you may contact:

**Office of Ombudsman Services
(800) 896-4042 (toll free) or
(559) 244-9177**

WHAT CAN I DO IF I FEEL THAT MY ADVANCE DIRECTIVES ARE NOT BEING FOLLOWED?

If you feel that your advance directive is not being honored, you may complain to:

**California Department of Health Services
Licensing and Certification
P.O. Box 997413
Sacramento, CA 95899-1413
(800) 236-9747 (toll free)**

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