

Health Care Agent



Wisconsin Medical Society

Advance Care Planning & Advance Directive by the Wisconsin Medical Society

This guide will help you learn about the role of the health care agent.

What is a health care agent?

A health care agent is a person who makes health care decisions for someone who cannot make their own choices. An agent may be needed if the person is very sick, injured or is nearing the end of their life. Choose a health care agent *before* a crisis.

When does a health care agent start to make choices?

An agent makes choices *only* if the person is not able to. Two doctors (and/or health care professionals authorized under current state law) have to agree that the person is not able to make his or her own choices.

What are some of the decisions that a health care agent may need to make?

A health care agent makes decisions *based upon the person's wishes and values*. An agent may make the following choices for the person:

- Decide on tests, surgery and medicine
- Choose the patient's doctor(s)
- Choose the location(s) where the person may receive care
- Decide to stop treatment
- Decide whether to share the patient's medical records

How do I know if I am ready to be a health care agent?

You should be able to answer *yes* to all of these questions:

- Am I willing?
- Have I spoken with the person about what he or she values?
- Can I follow the person's wishes even if I do not agree with them?
- Am I able to make choices in difficult moments?

For more information:

All adults should plan for future healthcare decisions, and the best time to do this is before a medical crisis occurs. Contact your doctor's office, hospital, or local Advance Care Planning resource to learn more and talk with a facilitator or someone trained to assist in this process.