



Advance Care Planning

Creating and Maintaining Advance Directive Documents

Do I need an attorney to create an Advance Directive?

No. You can ask a lawyer to help you if you want, but you do not have to. To make the forms legal, you must sign them in front of two qualified witnesses. You do not need a notary public or to have the form notarized.

Does it cost anything to create an Advance Directive?

No. Creating an Advance Directive is free and help is available from the Fox Valley Advance Care Planning Partnership at no charge, including classes, in-person and phone help, website resources and more. There may be a cost you create an Advance Directive with an attorney or other professional.

Can I change my mind?

Yes. If your wishes change or if you change your mind about who you want your Health Care Agent to be, just fill out a new form and get copies of the new form to your loved ones and your doctor. Talk to them about how your wishes have changed.

Can my spouse or a blood relative be one of my two witnesses?

No. Witnesses MUST NOT be your family member or relative (by blood, marriage, domestic partnership or adoption).

Can my Health Care Agent be a witness?

No. Witnesses must NOT be any of the people you listed as a Health Care Agent (or alternate agent).

Who should have copies of my Advance Directive?

At minimum, the people you list as Health Care Agents should have a copy of your Advance Directive. They should be aware of your wishes and agree to make decisions that you would want, even if they don't agree with them.

Your doctor's office and other health care providers that you see (like a specialist) should have a copy of your Advance Directive for your medical record. This way, if you are in an accident or suddenly become ill, they can access your information and ensure your wishes are known.

Where should I keep my document?

Keep your Advance Directive in a place where you and others can easily find it, but NOT in a safety deposit box. Make sure your family members, doctors, other health care providers, hospital and attorney are aware that you have an Advance Directive and give each of them a copy of your document. It is ideal to have the document in your medical record.

Are older versions of my Advance Directive still valid?

If you create a new document, that one becomes your valid Advance Directive. Older versions become null and void.

Are photocopies of Advance Directives valid?

Yes. A copy, fax, digital or original versions are all valid.

If I want to make changes, do I need a new document?

Yes. Once a document is witnessed it should not be changed. A new document should be completed if you change your mind on any of the questions, want to change the order of your Health Care Agents, or other reasons.